

**Empowering Rural Producer
Organisations within the World Bank
Initiatives: A Capitalisation Study**

Uganda Country Case Study

Jorge M. Diaz

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I. Introduction

Most of the agricultural sectors in less developed countries have undergone a series of reforms that aim at positioning the role of the market as the leading force to promote optimal resource allocation among the various economic activities. This has eventually resulted in the private sector taking over some of the functions formerly performed by the governments. Under these reforms, producer organisations as well as other rural sector institutions have been called to assume new responsibilities and play an active role in development-oriented processes. However, most of these organisations are not properly trained and prepared to be efficiently involved as key players in policy and decision-making or in more specific activities as in demand-driven agricultural service provision. In addition, current institutional setting does not provide for a facilitating environment where POs can actually participate and effectively engage in such processes.

In 1997, the World Bank and French Aid, with support from CIRAD, started a collaborative effort to: (a) strengthen the capacity of rural producer organizations and (b) promote partnership between demand-responsive agricultural services and rural producers organisations in Bank funded agricultural development project.

In order to assess the lessons learnt from this initiative and to contribute to identify a way forward, a study was conducted at two levels:

1. Review of PO empowerment related components on Bank's portfolio (1997-2003)
2. Country Case studies and in-depth analysis in four African countries (Senegal, Burkina Faso, Uganda and Ghana)

A country visit to Uganda was carried out on May 13-23 2003, centred on the analysis of what is currently one of the most important agricultural-related initiatives undertaken by the World Bank (jointly with the donor community) in this country: the National Agricultural Advisory Service NAADS. This analysis was focused on the role played by POs within this programme, stating in particular how involved they were in the preparation and further implementation of NAADS and which instruments and mechanisms were put in place to reinforce POs capabilities to perform their tasks. Information to conduct this study was obtained from bibliographical review and interviews with different stakeholders. A field visit was made to the districts of Mukono and Iganga.

II. Background

In order to provide a context to the analysis of the National Agricultural Advisory Service in Uganda, this chapter presents some of the most relevant trends and initiatives that influenced the way NAADS have been designed and implemented.

Since the early 1980s, Sub-Saharan Africa has been subjected to structural adjustment programmes promoted by multilateral institutions, meant to reorient African economies to the market. Uganda has not been an exception and since mid 1980s, the Government has engaged in a process of economic recovery, embracing such structural adjustment policies and promoting market liberalization. These reforms have been the response to a previous period of political and economic mismanagement that resulted in social and institutional collapse. The main objectives of these measures were to improve resource allocation and reduce the role of the government in production and commercial activities while promoting a more active and stronger involvement of the private sector. These reforms were also accompanied by a gradual decentralisation process that has transferred responsibilities from the central government to local councils (districts and sub-counties), with the goal of improving civil society participation, empowering local people in decision making and optimising service delivery.

As far as agriculture is concerned, the reforms were oriented towards the liberalization of factors markets, the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers (particularly those for inputs) and the elimination of export taxes. In addition, institutional adjustments have been and are currently being implemented, mainly in terms of privatisation of government enterprises and handing over responsibilities to the private sector. One of the major initiatives undertaken within the sector has been to dissolve the Extension Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, and transfer the duty of advisory services provision to local governments.

a. Poverty Eradication Action Plan, PEAP

During the last decade, encouraging results have been observed in terms of stabilisation of macro-economic indicators and overall economic growth. Nevertheless,

and despite the overall good performance, poverty continues to be a key issue and the main challenge that political, economic and social stability is facing. In order to tackle this problem, the government has defined the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), a long-term and overarching strategy that establishes poverty eradication as the fundamental goal of the government and provides a comprehensive framework for national planning and multi-sector engagement¹. By the time this Plan was launched (1997), about 45% of the population lived in poverty; PEAP set the objective of reducing the headcount of income poverty to 10 percent of the population by 2017². The PEAP is established on the following four pillars (MFPED, 2000):

1. Creating a framework for economic growth and transformation
2. Ensuring good governance and security
3. Directly increasing the ability of the poor to raise their incomes
4. Directly increasing the quality of the life of the poor

Through these pillars PEAP provides the guiding structure to define medium term plans and strategies as well as investment programmes for specific sectors³. In turn, and under the decentralised system adopted by the Government of Uganda, both PEAP and sector plans provide the framework for district planning.

In order to achieve the set goal of reducing poverty to 10% by year 2017, Government projections are built under the assumption that more targeted interventions -directed to increase incomes of the poorest- are required; in other words, overall economic growth would not be enough to fulfil these expectations. Regarding agriculture, pillar 3 of the PEAP underlines the fact that most Ugandans are self-employed, mainly in agriculture and concludes the need for both higher agricultural growth rates and non-farm employment in rural areas to attain sustainable poverty reduction. It assigns a key role to rural transport and energy infrastructure, land rights, research and extension, access to markets, and education and employment.

b. Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture, PMA

Given the conceptual approach furnished by the PEAP and the set of priorities related to agriculture and rural development identified in it, the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture, PMA, was prepared in 2000 as a multi-sector strategy oriented to *“eradicate poverty through a profitable, competitive, sustainable and dynamic agricultural and agro-industrial sector”* (MAAIF, 2000b). This vision is centred on the necessary transformation of subsistence farmers into commercial entrepreneurs.

¹ The initial PEAP was prepared in 1997. A revised version was finalized in the spring 2000. The PEAP of 1997 drew particular attention to the need for increased expenditure on the delivery of those services that directly benefit the poor. The Poverty Action Fund was created to support resource allocation to specific services outlined in the PEAP. This fund is supported through debt relief from the Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative HIPC and additional resources from donor community.

² Percentage of population below national poverty line.

³ That is the case for the long-term plans prepared for health, road, education and agricultural sectors.

As a tool to contribute to the achievement of the comprehensive goals of poverty eradication, the PMA has set the following objectives:

- Increase incomes and improve the quality of life of poor subsistence farmers through increased productivity and increased share of marketed production;
- Improve household food security through the market rather than emphasizing self sufficiency;
- Provide gainful employment through the secondary benefits of PMA implementation such as agro-processing factories and services;
- Promote sustainable use and management of natural resources by developing a land use and management policy and promotion of environmentally friendly technologies.

The PMA identifies the key areas in which specific policies for the agricultural sector should be developed and implemented. As far as research is concerned, the PMA specifically states that agricultural research will be farmer-oriented and farmer-driven and that private sector participation and funding need to be increased. Regarding agricultural advisory services, PMA affirms that: *“Government will formulate an extension policy that will promote an efficient extension service primarily based on private sector delivery. Given that in the foreseeable future, the provision of this kind of services to smallholder resource poor farmers will continue to be regarded as public good, Government will increase its overall annual spending on provision of extension services to poor farmer”*.

PMA devotes a substantial component to underline the new roles (and the required institutional adjustments) that agricultural stakeholders (both public and private) must play in the new setting that government reforms are promoting. That is the case for farmers and commodity associations whose possibility to participate more actively in policy making, programme implementation, contracting and service provision is explicitly addressed within PMA. Consequently, **the Plan stresses the need for the government to facilitate the process of capacity building and empowerment of the private sector.**

Following a process of consultation to local people in a number of selected districts, and emphasising those fields in which government initiative is more demanded⁴ the PMA identified six core areas for public action in agriculture:

- Research and technology development
- National agricultural advisory service
- Education for agriculture
- Improving access to rural finance
- Improving access to markets
- Sustainable natural resource utilization and management

⁴ The main source of consultation was the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP, 1999) a project that consulted poor farmers through field surveys, carried out in nine pilot districts.

Although all of these areas are related in one way or another to the specific topic of producer organisation empowerment (the central point of this study), only those issues connected to the way these organisations participate in the definition of research agendas and the further provision of agricultural extension services, are considered in this analysis.

c. Agricultural Research and Extension within the PMA

The consultation process shows how farmers recognise the lack of skills, information and knowledge as some of the constraints to increase productivity (a key goal of the PMA) and attribute these deficiencies to poor quality extension services, mainly due to low coverage and pertinence of services provided and lack of motivation and qualification of extension officers⁵. To overcome these limitations, farmers proposed **increased involvement of the private sector** (NGOs and farmers organisations), *an effective extension system delivering appropriate information, formation of groups (especially of women) to pool resources to improve farming collectively, the re-employment of retrenched extension officers, deployment of more, better-trained, adequately remunerated and facilitated officers, and empowerment of communities to demand services* (MAAIF, 2000b).

As a response to these findings, the PMA states that if the agricultural research system is to benefit the poor and contribute to food security, *it has to operate with the participation of farmers, have the capacity to perceive and interpret the poor peoples' needs, constraints and resources, and generate practical options to improve them*. Complementarily, the PMA asserts that a National Agricultural Advisory Service NAADS is to be put in place, where *"the farmers are empowered as partners and have a role to play. The work programmes and activities of these advisors will be*

⁵ The World Bank had funded an Agricultural Extension Project (1992) whose one of the main objectives was to build public sector capacity to deliver and support effective extension services. One of the outcomes was the so called Unified Extension Service, which resulted from the merging of the different extension duties comprised within several ministries into a sole system under the responsibility of the MAAIF. In addition, a management methodology of T&V was also instituted, initially in some pilot districts and later spread over the participating districts. Increasing concerns from different stakeholders arose regarding heavy bureaucratic structure and inappropriate conceptual approach of the new service. Eventually, discussions began to converge into the necessity of orienting extension services towards the empowerment of communities and farmers, enhancing their capacities to assess and identify their own needs and solutions with the support of outside facilitators. This project was rated unsatisfactory (see World Bank, 2000b Implementation Completion Report for Agricultural Extension Project - Report No. 20591).

For additional references regarding the perception on the former extension model, see also:

- NAADS Secretariat, 2001b. Quarterly Progress Report, July-September 2001, Annex 3: Experiences of Extension Services in Latin America).
- Parliament of the Republic of Uganda: Report of the Committee on Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries on the Ministerial Budget Policy Statement for the MAAIF for the fiscal year 2001/2002: *"The lack of an explicit extension policy is yet another major challenge. The Committee hopes that NAADS implementation will not be like the Agricultural Extension Programme, which expired in 1999 with little or no visible impact"*.
- World Bank, 1999b. AKIS Discussion Paper No. 22305

determined by farmers themselves. The advisors will therefore effectively become de facto employees to farmers, rendering advisory services to help farmers make better decisions about their farms”.

An advisory service as such, implies a change in paradigm that considers at least the following guiding principles:

- Decentralisation of the service to improve accuracy of needs assessment and pertinence of service delivery
- Increasing participation of farmers and shifting their role from beneficiaries of the extension process to users of high-quality advice in a demand driven market
- Improving private sector capacity to provide advice in a market oriented service delivery
- Changing the role of the government from a direct provider of technical advice to a facilitator of a private market for extension

This intent obviously needs to be accompanied by an efficient mechanism that ensures real and effective farmers’ participation, which in turn requires strong capacity building and empowerment of farmer organisations. As it will be discussed later, NAADS has privileged the strengthening of organisational and participatory capacities at a local level, giving a lesser priority to national-coverage producer organisations, with the argument that their links with base communities are rather weak and therefore their capacity to mobilise grass root organisations (an eventually to reach the poorest) could be quite uncertain.

III. Farmer Organisations in Uganda

The purpose of this section is to provide a general overview on the institutional arrangement of farmer organisations that currently prevails in Uganda. It does not intend to be an in-depth analysis of the evolution and causes that have shaped the way farmers are organised today, but to facilitate the understanding of the linkages they have at present with the NAADS proposed institutional setting.

The Cooperative movement has played a substantial role in the way farmer organisations have evolved in Uganda. Through its wide-spread network, cooperatives have become one of the major participants in factor and product markets in rural areas, reaching most of the villages with people experienced in trading with farmers. During the seventies and early eighties, the role and activities performed by cooperatives were mostly government-controlled and supervised and in consequence, acted as an extension of the respective ministries. They performed roles as agents for state marketing organisations within heavily regulated markets, in which cooperatives had monopoly power in primary markets of main export commodities. (World Bank, 1993a; 1993b and 1994a). Following the economic, social and institutional turmoil of that period, the current government promoted, since 1987 a revision of the Cooperatives Law and substantial changes were introduced through a new legal

framework constructed upon participatory consultation that included grass-root organisations. The resulting new Law of 1991 brought in more rigorous financial requirements and owner responsibilities as well as better coordination between the government and the apex organisation, the Uganda Cooperative Alliance.

In addition, economic policy reforms in terms of market liberalization have also had substantial effects on cooperatives performance. For instance, the liberalization of domestic and export marketing of certain commodities, the abolition of administered prices and the removal of heavy taxes levied on certain export products have had a positive impact on cooperative development. The enhancement of the participation of other private-sector organisations has challenged the traditional advantageous position of cooperatives and has induced them to become more aware of their members' interest and objectives. In this sense, adjustments in legal framework have made an effort to facilitate this transition.

However, despite of these substantial reforms, and according with some studies carried out on cooperative development (and other civil society organisations), one of the key issues to be overcome has to do with the actual involvement and participation of members (particularly farmers) in prioritising, planning and monitoring of the various activities undertaken by their cooperatives. This aspect is of the utmost importance and the capacity of farmers to actively participate in decision-making and efficiently perform control and accountability on their organisations needs to be increased if cooperatives as well as other farmer organisations are to be considered as key actors in local development.

As a matter of fact, there exists a great diversity of civil society organisations in Uganda, mostly related to agriculture and rural activities with varying life-cycles and a wide-ranging set of objectives and roles, but mainly characterised by their small size and scope, their limited impact, their reduced managerial capacity and their vulnerable financial sustainability. Some of these shortcomings may also become advantages as they involve a more flexible structure that allows them to adjust themselves to changing environments and provide services in conditions in which other better-structured organisations are not capable of.

Recognising the strategic importance of these organisations, some official initiatives (with their corresponding funding instruments) have been put in place to mobilise the capacities of non-governmental and community based organisations to strengthen their linkages with local governments as a strategy to coordinate and optimise the different actions carried out locally. (World Bank, 1994b.)

Regarding producer organisations, the Ministry of Agriculture with the support of the donor community, promoted the constitution of an association to bring together farmers and the existing organisations and provide them with an institutional framework to strengthen coordination among them and improve their dialogue with the government. The Uganda National Farmers Association UNFA was hence constituted in 1992 with the support of the Danish Cooperation (Danida). UNFA -sometimes in

joint cooperation with the Cooperative Alliance and other agriculture-related organisations- provided services to its members such as agricultural advisory, training and capacity building.

In fact, as a response to the poor performance of the former Training and Visit extension service (see footnote 5), the Government supported the formation and development of UNFA's demand-driven/cost-recovery agricultural advisory service, first introduced in 1995. Through this initiative, UNFA's intended objective was to empower farmers to mobilize and train fellow farmers and help them better access technological and other services on a needs-based and participatory scheme. This conceptual approach was mostly incorporated in the general guidelines of the PMA (Kagwisagye, 1997).

Given its decentralised structure, with branches in most of the Ugandan districts, and in order to enable the association to become open to more organisations, UNFA adopted a federative scheme becoming, in 2002, the Uganda National Farmers Federation, UNFFE. Today, UNFFE is comprised of 71 organisations (farmers' organizations -district and commodity-based-, community-based farmers' organizations, agro-related industries/services, and honorary members approved by the National Farmers' Council, its supreme decision-making body).

According to some of the PO leaders interviewed, before UNFA turned into a Federation, a series of discussions took place as to the necessity to form an umbrella body that enabled farmers to speak with one voice, and the capabilities and leadership of UNFA were then questioned, as well as its legal possibilities to embrace other organisations. As result of this process, the Agricultural Council of Uganda was created in 2000 as an Apex body that currently comprises most of the agricultural commodity-oriented organisations) as well as agro-processing industries, service providers, input suppliers and NGOs (Otim, 2003). UNFFE is a member of the ACU.

Concerning producers of commodities, there exists a considerable number of organisations whose participatory structure, representativeness and linkage with local communities is rather contrasting. Some of them are merely visible at a national level and their capabilities to collect and support the interests of those producers they intend to represent are quite questionable. However, others preserve a dense network of members spread almost all over the country and therefore they have the potential to reach grass root organisations, capture specific local demands and mobilise collective interests. This large divergence has been frequently acknowledged in government and donors' documents but specific actions to tackle this situation and eventually make the most out of these differences is certainly missing.

IV. National Agricultural Advisory Service, NAADS

Within this conceptual framework, a Government Task Force with the participation of the donor community, put together the National Agricultural Advisory Service, NAADS

as a programme of the Government of Uganda to increase the efficiency and quality of the agricultural extension services, through a decentralised, demand-driven and private sector-oriented approach, as a response to the poor performance and low stakeholder support of the existing Unified Extension Service (MAAIF, 2000a; World Bank, 2001b).

a. Objectives

The general objective of NAADS is *to ensure that farmers apply improved husbandry and management practices, and identify and solve their technical and marketing problems using appropriate and modern knowledge and technologies.*

The specific objectives are to:

- Increase the availability of appropriate advice and information to all the farmer types in an equitable and cost-effective manner;
- Avail appropriate technologies in sufficient quantities to meet identified farmer needs;
- Assure the quality of advice and information provided to farmers by service providers;
- Enhance the capacity of private sector service providers to meet farmer advice and information needs;
- Develop appropriate farmer-controlled institutional structures and processes for managing the NAADS at all levels.

b. Principles

To achieve the mentioned objectives, NAADS will be guided by the following principles:

- **Empowering the farmers** in agricultural advisory processes and building demand for both research and agricultural advisory services
- Targeting agricultural services to the poor farmers who constitute the majority
- Mainstreaming gender issues
- Deepening decentralisation to bring the control of the services, research and advisory services, nearer to the farmers
- Commercialisation –including intensification of productivity and specialisation
- **Participatory processes** in planning, contracting monitoring and evaluation
- Managing natural resource productivity
- Increasing institutional efficiency through contracting out services, better linkages between research, advisors and farmers
- Harmonisation of donor supported projects with PMA principles

A detailed look at these principles, particularly to those aspects closely related with farmers' capacity building, shows that some of the main concerns addressed by NAADS are the weakness of **farmer's organisational capacity** and the limited existing institutions to act collectively. These shortcomings not only keep them from

having efficient and sustainable access to those resources required to carry out their agricultural activities, but also restrain them from having their voices heard in spaces where decisions that affect their lives are made.

In addition, given the impact that **decentralisation** has on empowering local communities, NAADS is pursuing a deepening process of decentralisation to transfer more planning, implementing and monitoring of agricultural extension responsibilities from the districts to lower levels of local governments. This would facilitate grass-root level organisations to participate more closely in NAADS activities and to involve themselves in decision-making processes with their governments. However, even when these processes are conducted in a decentralised manner, the actual **participation** of farmers' organisations is not as effective and successful as it is desirable. NAADS acknowledges that a lack of fluid and fruitful communication between these organisations and development workers is the main constraint to having a real participation of grass-root organisations into the different phases of the development process. Therefore, the Programme envisages *"to act as an environment for the evolution of appropriate participatory approaches for the unique and diverse conditions of farmers that prevail in Uganda"* (MAAIF, 2000a).

c. Components

NAADS has been conceived as a long lasting programme, with a time framework of 25 years. Its first phase (out of five) will run for seven years and has an estimated cost of US\$ 108 millions. During these first seven years, NAADS will be funded by a pool of donors, the central and local governments and producer organisations. The World Bank participates with roughly 42% of this funding, through a Specific Investment Loan (SIL) on the amount of US\$ 45 million. The Programme was officially launched on March 2002 and the first two years are a trail-blazing stage. Its activities were carried out initially in six districts (12 sub-counties) and have been expanded to 10 more.

NAADS is expected to achieve its objectives through a number of activities that will be comprised in the following five components:

A. Advisory and Information Services to Farmers. (US\$ 76.4 million). This component supports initiatives by farmers working together in groups with their Sub-county government, to contract agricultural advisors to deliver identified priority services. In general, this is the component through which most of producer empowerment will be targeted. Support is provided by the following set of activities:

- a. Orientation and Mobilisation:* these activities are meant to facilitate farmers to acquire new attitudes and capacities that enable them to effectively control the NAADS. Farmers get support to organise themselves to demand agricultural advisory and other services, and to monitor and evaluate their own performance and that of the service

providers. Organisation and participation are oriented through the formation of a hierarchy of farmer institutions rooted in village level farmer groups. The village level groups federate to form Farmer Forums at Sub-county level, that are eventually replicated at District and National level. Forums are new institutional structures that are proposed to interface with government particularly within the decision-making processes in the management of NAADS. A legal framework has been created to enable them to operate.

- b. *Participatory Planning*: The planning processes in the NAADS intend to be participatory facilitating (mostly with the support of NGOs) group discussions, consensus building, collaborative learning approaches and other participatory methodologies. The primary plans originate from the Farmers Groups and their aggregation should be undertaken at sub-county, district and national levels.
- c. *Contracting Advisory Services*: Advisors are contracted at the sub-county level. In the contracting arrangements, the poor and female farmers will be specifically targeted through supporting the development of gender sensitive procedures and guidelines for accessing contract services.
- d. *Information and Communications*: These activities are meant as a tool in the commercialisation process, specifically to provide market information and identify market opportunities and as a backup to advisory services to increase farmer access to useful data, knowledge and technology. Information and communication needs and the appropriate strategy to be implemented in this field will be assessed at sub-county, district and national level.

- B. Technology Development and Linkages with Markets.** (US\$ 7.0 million). This component is designed to enable the farmers to be pro-active in the technology generation and development processes by putting at their disposal funds to contract researchers to work with them in their fields in developing and adapting technologies arising directly out of their expressed needs. It supports the multiplication of technologies at sub-county and district levels and promotes the creation of linkages among farmers, advisers and researchers.
- c. Quality Assurance – Regulations and Technical Auditing of Service Providers.** (US\$ 1.5 million). This component supports the establishment of a regulatory framework for service providers by setting and enforcing standards for qualification and performance.
- D. Private Sector Institutional Development.** (US\$ 4.8 million). This component assists private service providers to retrain and up-grade their skills and supports training of leaders of farmers' organisations in managerial and leadership.

E. Programme Management and Monitoring. (US\$ 18.3 million). This component establishes and supports public institutions at both the National and Local Government levels to play their statutory roles with respect to the NAADS. This includes monitoring and evaluation of programme activities, and establishment of Management Information Systems.

d. Role of farmers in the implementation of NAADS interventions

The proposed mechanism to carry out all the activities of NAADS is based on the decentralised institutional arrangement that prevails in Uganda; that is to say, local governments have an important share of responsibility and autonomy in decision-making and resource allocation. The programme is deepening the transfer of responsibilities on agricultural extension from districts to sub-counties, on the bases of an increasing coordination of local governments with farmer organisations.

In this sense, NAADS has designed a scheme through which it promotes farmer participation from the grass-root level, through the constitution of farmer groups. These groups are responsible for Programme implementation at parish and village levels and provide a setting to identify and prioritise members' needs for advisory services. These priorities, in turn, constitute the bases for the preparation of the NAADS Sub-county Plan (NAADS, 2001a). They must register themselves with the local authorities in order to be officially recognised by the programme and therefore to be eligible to participate in the different components. Existing groups are also considered and they must get through the registration procedure as well and comply the set of requirements defined by NAADS.

The groups are conceived as the building blocks for farmer participation within the Programme and they elect a hierarchy of representative bodies called the farmer forums at sub-county, district and national levels⁶. These forums comprise the participation of government and NAADS representatives and therefore provide the interface between farmers and government institutions for collective decision-making. For instance, at a sub-county level farmer forums decide on planning and contracting of advisory services and are also responsible for the approval of sub-county's work plans and budgets; funds are made available to each sub-county to contract the services they require under the orientations of the mentioned work plans.

At a district level, the functions of the Farmer Forums encompass approval of plans and budgets and monitoring and advisory to NAADS on implementation of the programme at this level.

It is also envisaged the creation of the National Farmer Forum, which in principle will be composed by the chairpersons of the districts farmer forums and two additional

⁶ A legal amendment was required to provide official existence to farmer groups and forums and to entitle them to make decisions on resource allocation. According to the Quarterly Progress Report of Jan-Mar 2003, more than 5.500 farmer groups have been identified in the ongoing 15 NAADS districts. 2.412 of them have been registered. (NAADS, 2003).

farmers from the same districts, as well as other stakeholders identified by the MAAIF. It will have as objectives the participation on evaluation and monitoring of NAADS, guidance on agricultural policy and nomination of farmers representatives on the NAADS board, among others.

The NAADS board of directors is currently composed of 15 members of whom 11 are farmers' representatives. Some of them are also members of the Agricultural Council of Uganda. The remaining 4 members are representatives from public institutions and academic sector (Prime Minister's Office, MAAIF, NAADS, Faculty of Agriculture).

The other key actors in the implementation of NAADS are the service providers, which under the approach promoted by the PMA, can be individuals or institutions from the private sector whose main function is to carry out the advisory service demanded by farmers (through their respective forums) and under the orientation of NAADS secretariat, sub-county and district governments. Annex 1 depicts the way NAADS operates and the linkages between the different actors.

V. Methodological Issues

As it was mentioned, this country case study makes part of a comprehensive initiative whose objective is to analyse how the effort of the World Bank to invest on Empowerment of Rural Producer Organisations has evolved, and particularly, how these organisations are being positioned through World Bank-funded projects to enhance and optimise their participation as key development actors. Therefore, Country Case Studies were not conceived to evaluate the ongoing projects financed by the Bank neither they attempt to appraise the way agricultural services are being provided in the framework of these projects.

The analysis conducted in Uganda was centred on the NAADS programme and particularly on the role that farmers' organisations are playing in its different stages and components. Attention should be drawn to the fact that this programme has been effectively in place for over a year (official launch on March 2002) and its current stage, in some aspects, does not allow to point out conclusive findings.

A wide range of information sources were consulted to complete the report, including:

- World Bank relevant documents (CAS, PADs, Aide Memoires, Completion Reports, Working Papers, Workshop proceedings, etc)
- Documents prepared by the NAADS Secretariat
- Interviews to the various stakeholders of NAADS (MAAIF, NAADS and World Bank officials, farmers, leaders of producer organisations, members of NAADS board of directors, Research Centres, Service Providers, NGOs, Women Associations, other donors)
- Bibliographical review of other relevant sources

Interviews to officers and representatives at a national level were carried out in Kampala. Farmer Groups and Forums at district and sub-county levels as well as NAADS officers and other stakeholders at these levels were contacted in field visits to the districts of Mukono and Iganga.

VI. Results and Recommendations

As it was stated at the beginning of this report, this study is not an evaluation of NAADS and therefore it does not pretend to appraise its overall structure and its integral performance. It strictly focuses on the analysis of POs from the standpoint of their participation and reinforcement within the Programme. Furthermore, the presentation and discussion of these findings do not pretend to question the validity of NAADS as an innovative mechanism to deliver agricultural advice to poor farmers but to highlight the main constraints that have been identified and that, in our view, require a revision to consolidate the programme and to reinforce its impact and sustainability. The main findings are focused on (i) the synthesis of the main contributions and innovations of this new approach; (ii) the breakdown of the role and real involvement of POs in the different phases of NAADS and (iii) the analysis of the institutional setting implemented by the Programme, particularly in those aspects concerning directly to POs.

a. Main innovations provided by NAADS

As discussed above, the government of Uganda has expressed in most of its sector policy documents its intentions to move away from some of its former tasks to transfer increasing responsibilities to the civil society. NAADS has succeeded in reflecting and making operational this intentions, by supporting and putting into practice a participatory environment where government shares with farmers some of its privileges in the design and implementation of public policies for the development of agricultural and rural sectors. This initiative has even resulted in the adjustment of the legal framework to enable POs decide on resource and budget allocation; which is particularly important, since one of the critical issues when empowering POs is the commitment of governments and public institutions.

In addition, NAADS is contributing to deepen the ongoing decentralisation process of Uganda, by transferring more responsibilities to lower levels of administrations. This obviously complements the purpose of enhancing people's participation at local levels. Even if some adjustments need to be adopted, there is a general perception that the leading approach used by NAADS will contribute to respond to the necessity to put closer the research and extension services to the needs of farmers.

An aspect that needs to be underlined is the intention to harmonise NAADS activities and goals with those of other initiatives. For instance, an important effort is being made to well-match the Outreach, Extension and Technology Dissemination

component of the current Second Agricultural Research and Training Project ARTPII with NAADS activities (World Bank, 1999a and 2003).

b. Place and Role of producer organisations in NAADS

It is evident that NAADS has set up a goal of advisory delivery improvement based on the necessity to enhance farmers' capacity to actively participate in the assessment of their own needs and the decisions of the type of solutions they require from an extension service programme. These intentions are reflected not only in the conceptual approach that leads NAADS development, but also in the organisational scheme –centred on the role played by farmer groups– that has been proposed to achieve the Programme goals. The rationale behind the constitution of these groups at all levels as pillars for decision-making and planning confirms the intention to reinforce farmers institutions, even if –as it will be discussed later– the way this process has been implemented raises sometimes concerns regarding its sustainability and pertinence.

i. Participation of POs in formulation of NAADS

The participatory procedure put in place to carry out the preparation of the EPAP and particularly the PMA, furnished valuable information on the perception of farmers and other stakeholders with regard to the existing extension services, principally on the following topics: (i) their needs for a more pertinent and high-qualified advisory delivery system; (ii) the importance they assigned to extension as a key factor to improve productivity and in-farm income generation and (iii) the low level of farmer involvement in decisions regarding agricultural extension. In this sense, these previous consultation processes as well as other workshops more focused on the specific issue of advisory services gave ground for the design of NAADS.

However, and despite of the participatory spirit that drove these prior initiatives, the perception of some stakeholders is quite contrasting. Some argue that most of the events organised to facilitate the consultation (workshops, seminars, etc) were instead information meetings to explain to producers and other actors the purpose and scope of the Programme, and that in this context, they were not intended to reach the farmers to consult their needs or to debate the more plausible mechanisms to implement an innovative extension service.

This criticism exposes the usual discrepancy between what policy-makers and/or donors believe about **participation** and what communities and other stakeholders are actually expecting from it. This misperception points out the challenge to put into practice true participatory processes but also sometimes reveal the real willingness of the former to engage in this sort of processes. Indicators selected to perform projects' evaluation and monitoring very often reflect the poor commitment in this sense: the number of workshops carried out, the amount of people who attended them, the quantity of surveys submitted, etc may show a high level of activity in using consultation tools but does not disclose the real impact of such consultation. It is

hence critical to design indicators that actually reflect the impact of the said participatory process as well as the true involvement of those actors invited to engage in them.

In this aspect, NAADS should pay particular attention; an effort like this one to bring up a new paradigm in service provision, needs to be built on the trust of all actors; an illusive participatory process will erode NAADS image and eventually jeopardise its possibility to put into practice an innovative mechanism to provide advisory service to farmers.

In addition, several allusions were made in relation to a workshop carried out in Kampala in May 2000 and organised by the World Bank with the objective of bringing together POs and exchange impressions regarding their access to inputs and their better involvement in Bank-funded projects (World Bank, 2000c). Some POs leaders referred to the fact that despite of the consensus achieved in this meeting about the importance of enhancing POs participation and empowerment through specific and explicit components within World Bank projects, the real involvement they had subsequently in the formulation of NAADS was rather disappointing, and therefore, some of the aspects and elements of the programme are considered unsatisfactory to them.

Summarising, although most of the stakeholders widely acknowledge the increasingly participatory approach of the World Bank and its attempt to expand its dialogue with civil society, an explicit concern has been expressed as to improve farmer's need assessment by better listening to them.

ii. Participation of POs in implementation of NAADS

As it has been reiterated, the pillars for the implementation of NAADS are the farmer groups (formalised at a local level) and the farmer forums built upon them. However, the true capability of these institutions to play a key role in the implementation of the programme (and therefore, a major factor for success) is based on their capacity to effectively organise themselves and to assume the responsibilities they have been assigned (see description of their functions in section IV.d.). In order to facilitate this process and given the current stage of development of POs at a local level, a capacity building mechanism has been designed, founded on the actions of NGOs which are responsible of carrying out the empowerment of POs. Obviously, these NGOs must be prepared to be the optimal performer of this task, by addressing the relevant issues and applying the appropriate methodology to accomplish this process⁷. Another factor of success lies on the willingness and actual capabilities of local governments to

⁷ In addition, as stated by the report on NGOs and CBOs in Uganda (see World Bank, 1994b) "NGOs do not necessarily have the reach and penetration to the poor (particularly in remote areas) which it is often assumed they do". A study case conducted on an international consortium of twenty European and Canadian NGOs acting in Uganda, indicated that "despite local partnerships, lack of geographic penetration and lack of knowledge of the region were amongst the contributing factors to the collapse of the project".

engage in the institutional adjustment required to put in place a service delivery system as the one proposed by NAADS ⁸.

In other words, the intention of structuring a whole demand-oriented, farmer-driven extension system lies almost entirely (at least at the initial stages) on external agents (the capacities of NGOs, commitment and capabilities of local governments and NAADS officials, qualification of service providers). Obviously, this situation makes the system vulnerable and risks its development and further consolidation. However, a plausible way to attenuate this difficulty could be by giving to National POs the responsibility to closely accompany the process and play a leading role in ensuring that group formation is pertinent and the training they receive is suitable.

Those directly responsible for the formulation of NAADS considered that National Producer Organisations were not strongly rooted at village and parish levels and that therefore their capacity to represent poor and less endowed farmers (the target group of NAADS) was quite uncertain; as a result of this thinking, these organisations were not invited to play a key role in the implementation of the programme. We do not disregard this argument; obviously POs present different levels of organisation, often lack appropriate representative and participatory mechanisms and some times have particular agendas that do not necessarily reflect the interest of the poorest.

However, Uganda has witnessed during the last decade, a new attempt to establish an institutional framework for producer organisations (see section III of this report), being the Agricultural Council of Uganda the most recent effort to consolidate an apex organisation for farmers. Furthermore, some commodity-oriented organisations actually have fairly strong connections with their associates and therefore could have provided a facilitating environment for the implementation of NAADS. Such is the case for Coffee, whose production lies on thousands of families in a wide number of sub-counties and whose apex organisation, the Uganda Coffee Farmers' Association has identified producers' empowerment and capacity building as the main initiative in a strategic agenda to overcome poverty and promote modernization of coffee production.

For these reasons, it seems natural to incorporate these organisations in the implementation of the programme and assign them clear responsibilities as well as demand from them specific contributions in the execution of NAADS. Obviously, the necessary instruments must be put in place to assist them overcome their limitations, in the same way that capacity building for the other actors has been considered ⁹.

⁸ As mentioned in the Quarterly Progress Report of January-March 2003, some councillors opposed the idea of transferring budget allocation and contracting decisions to the sub-county farmers forums, and have insisted on giving this power to local councils (NAADS, 2003).

⁹ Although the fourth component of NAADS, Private Sector Institutional Development, considers the support to National Representative Organisations, it does not leave too much room for the reinforcement of POs. This component is mostly oriented towards the development of service providers.

In other words, the limited connection between federative-type producer organisations and their bases should not be treated as a shortcoming to be discarded but must be fully addressed by NAADS as an opportunity to effectively work on a comprehensive empowerment of these organisations. Accordingly, NAADS should encourage both apex and national POs to get truly involved in the process of organising local and community based farmer groups to pave their way towards their consolidation as pillars of the system. By doing so, NAADS would support not only the empowerment of local farmer groups, as originally intended, but also the strengthening of POs through the reinforcement of their linkages with their constituencies, which in turn, enhances their legitimacy. This broad effort will eventually contribute to underpin the process of institutional capacity building in the agricultural and rural sectors of Uganda, which will, in consequence, facilitate the appropriate accomplishment of NAADS objectives¹⁰.

Furthermore, the process of identification of priorities within an agricultural extension service should not only be based on the outcomes of local participatory processes. In other words, local consultation and participation is certainly necessary, but not always sufficient for a high-quality decision-making process. In fact, variables such as worldwide tendencies, national strategic commodity priorities, regional and national land management policies, international agreements, among others, which must be incorporated by local actors in order to make well-informed decisions, may be better managed and oriented by national institutions. And the responsibility of provision of this sort of information must not be restrained to NAADS officials and NGOs. National and apex organisations with a broader view of the sector and detailed information on respective commodities will certainly play an important role in this process. This argument reinforces our conviction on the pertinence of engaging more actively national producer organisations.

It could be argued that POs are very well represented in the NAADS' Board of Directors, and therefore, that they have the means to orient overall decisions and look after their collective interests. This is partially true, as currently more than 50% of the members of this body come from the farmer's community and some represent apex organisations. This Board presently comprises representatives from the Uganda Goat Development Network, the Beekeepers Association, the Coffee Farmers' Association, the Uganda Beef Production Association, the Uganda Fishermen and Fish Conservation Association and the Uganda National Farmers Federation. However, some POs leaders (members of the board) have expressed their scepticism on their real possibility to induce changes or influence decisions. It is not within the scope of this analysis to judge the validity of these perceptions, but even if they are not well founded, they reveal a discontent and perhaps a malfunctioning process of decision making at a national level that NAADS must address thoroughly.

¹⁰ These findings coincide with the conclusions of a study on the evolution of the institutional framework in the rural sector in Uganda, which highlights that restructuring the linkages between farmer groups and existing POs is a precondition for the establishment of a competitive agriculture. (See POUSSÉ. E. 2002).

If stakeholders perceive their role and responsibilities as merely ornamental, they will eventually lack the necessary sense of ownership required to become promoters and advocates of the new paradigm of advisory service delivery.

c. Organisational structures put in place by NAADS

Under the rationale of a demand-oriented programme based on farmers capacities to directly generate the extension services they require and that they feel are the most appropriate for their specific conditions, the most evident critical point to ensure its success is the existence of a community of farmers capable of identifying their needs, prioritise them and scale them to upper levels of decision to institutionalise their demand and generate the offer of those services required.

That is to say, two conditions are to be met for a programme such as this to be put into practice: (i) farmers need to be actively involved in decision-making regarding the needs for agricultural services, hence favouring the pertinence of the deliverables and the ownership of the system; and (ii) farmers need to be organised to guarantee, through collective action, the legitimacy of their decisions and actions and therefore the constitution of a sustainable system.

Since these two conditions were not clearly present in Uganda, it was then necessary that the programme to be implemented took into account a mechanism to respond to the prevailing institutional weakness. In this sense, the formation of farmer groups at a local level seemed an adequate solution in the right direction.

In other words, the weak institutional framework of producer organisations that existed (and still does) in Uganda was interpreted by the Programme designers as a valid justification to promote additional forms of organisation in order to achieve the goals established by NAADS.

In this aspect, some remarks may be made. Agricultural and rural sectors in less developed countries are certainly characterised by their weak institutional setting; therefore, development oriented actions both general and sectoral must endeavour, as one of their main goals, the strengthening of institutions. However, for sake of this goal, policy makers, donors and/or project designers usually come up with institutional arrangements that may be optimal only for the purpose of carrying out the project or even in the short run may appear as good ways to tackle institutional deficiencies, but actually disturb ongoing processes (though incipient and imperfect) of organisational building and put into risk more structural medium and long run efforts. Capacity building of farmer organisations is both a **slow process** shaped by social, economic and political conditions, and a **two-way process**, in which governments and donors also need to reinforce their capacities to understand and better interact with POs and CBOs. Pushing its development may result in artificial and unsustainable settings with poor legitimacy and pertinence (Rondot, P. and Collion, M.H. 2001; World Bank, 1994b).

Moreover, the set of incentives put in place to boost the process of institutional building and that can only be accessed by the new organisations (demand-led funds for contracting advisory services, resources for training and capacity building, participation in decision-making, etc), can eventually deepen the risk and vulnerability of the existing organisations and/or initiatives. These incentives must be used in a way to promote synergic reactions between new and existing forms or organisations.

A final comment regarding NAADS structure has to do with the expected representative mechanism envisaged through the farmer forums. As explained in section IV.d. farmers will scale up their representation from parishes through the constitution of forums in the upper sub-county, district and national levels. Although national organisations are in general not deeply rooted at parish levels –as mentioned above- they are more institutionalised and have a stronger visibility and participation at the national level, and therefore, an emerging institution such as the national farmers forum will certainly be a source of conflict¹¹. This situation per-se is not negative, since it may provide the grounding for a counter-power adjustment among existing and new organisations that could eventually reinforce the institutional setting. However, NAADS secretariat must be attentive to avoid unnecessary rivalry and rather encourage complementary efforts among them.

d. Additional considerations regarding NAADS and Producer Organisations

A good number of NAADS stakeholders coincide on the fact that for the Programme to have a high and positive impact on empowerment of POs, most of the other components of the PMA must be secured and put in place simultaneously¹². In particular, concerns were expressed on the necessity to strongly implement the component of micro-financing, since through this mechanism farmers could have access to the additional funding required to invest in agricultural projects. NAADS must pay particular attention to this, as the successful adoption of efficient technologies is usually restricted by the scarce availability of resources. In fact, while visiting a demonstration site where the impact of adopting a new technology was evident in terms of better yields and higher profits, some of the farmers recognised that budget constrains for initial investment will restrain them from putting it into practice in their own farms.

¹¹ In fact, this same type of procedure has been proposed by other World Bank Agricultural Service Projects in Africa but opposition from POs has forced to modify them.

¹² In the same line, a Country Assistance Evaluation performed by the World Bank Operation Evaluation Department OED concluded that: *“The Bank’s approach to agriculture has been fragmented. Once the spate of market liberalization reforms in agriculture was over, the Bank seems to have lost sight of agriculture’s key role in reducing poverty and promoting the regeneration of the private sector. Agricultural modernization requires an integrated approach, focusing on research and technology, extension, marketing, and the commercialisation of cash crop production, but the Bank’s interventions in the sector have been fragmented. Moreover, the Bank needs to listen to farmers when assessing farming needs”*. See World Bank, 2001c. Uganda: Policy, Participation, People. Country Assistance Evaluation, OED. 220p.

In addition, it is evident that the World Bank is increasingly recognising the importance of reinforcing the organisational capacities of local communities in general, and POs in particular. In consequence, stakeholders acknowledge today that even if some adjustment and fine-tuning is required to improve the dialogue with development actors, decisions are gradually made closer to farmers needs.

However, this intention has been usually subordinated to other goals within specific projects; PO empowerment hence becomes part of a complex structure, which results in the actual strengthening of these organisations passing through a series of sometimes heavy and unsustainable mechanisms.

Given the strategic role that POs play in rural development, their strengthening and support should generate, per se, a sole initiative, capable of comprising and coordinating individual and isolated projects. This could eventually give higher coherence to the promotion of institutional strengthening and facilitate its linkages with general development initiatives.

VII. Concluding remarks

It exists a long tradition of rural organisations in Uganda, which have been shaped by both political and social turmoil of the 60's and 70's and the direct influence of an economy strongly oriented by the government.

There has been a significant effort from the government and the donor community to design a coherent, comprehensive and long-term policy framework that provides clear orientation for programs and projects within the agricultural and rural sectors.

It also exists a rich experience of initiatives on extension and service delivery systems to farmers where contrasting conceptual approaches have been put into place. A clear intention can also be observed to modernize these systems taking advantage of the learning obtained from these initiatives.

Within this setting, NAADS has capitalised on these previous developments and is actually giving an additional step in institutional adjustments by deepening the decentralisation process, putting into practice some general principles such as participatory decision making, demand-driven and farmer-oriented service provision. Even more, NAADS acknowledges that farmers' capacities must be strengthened as a condition for these institutional reforms to be successfully implemented.

However, the institutional innovations put together by NAADS may generate contradictions with its intention to reinforce farmers' capacities if they do not take closely into account existing arrangements. Promoting new and, to some extent, parallel institutions such as the groups and the fora may certainly facilitate the execution of the project, but could also disrupt social processes currently underway, which eventually weaken both local communities and institutions.

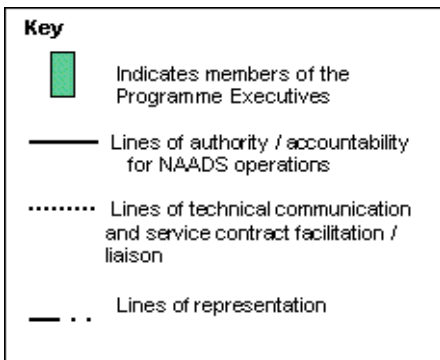
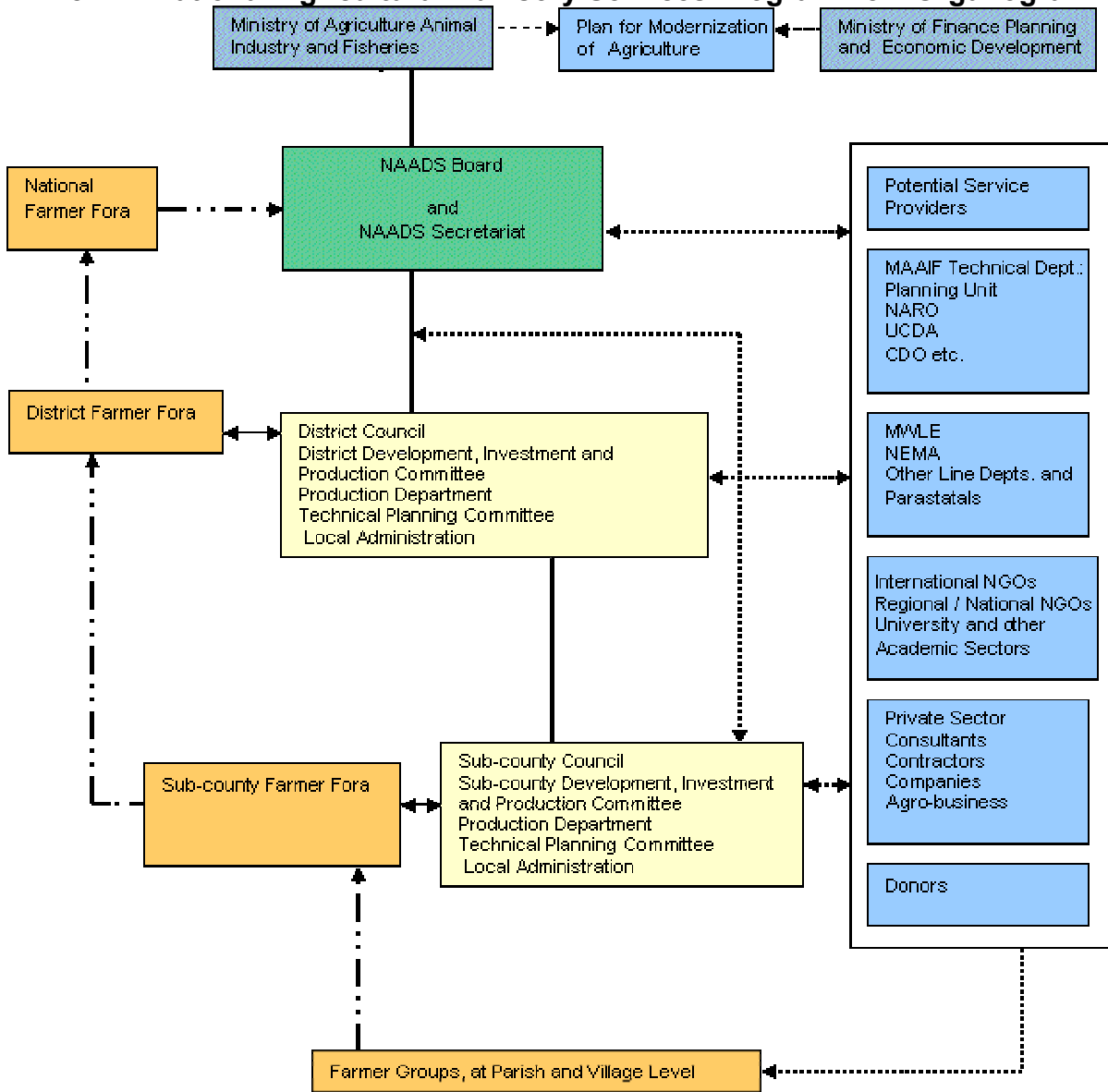
Regardless their actual capacity to promote base participation or to represent the collective interests of the poor, national and local producer organisations must play an active role in the execution of NAADS. In fact, by promoting truly participatory processes, NAADS will put POs closer to their constituencies facilitating the disclosure of limitations such as poor representativeness, weak participation and doubtful legitimacy. Through the orientation of NAADS, this will eventually provide ground for specific actions to empower farmers and develop more accountable organisations, which is ultimately a guiding principle of NAADS.

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Annex 1 - National Agricultural Advisory Services Programme – Organogramme



Source: NAADS web page. www.naads.or.ug