

**Title** Farm extension: New frontiers  
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**Citation** Book of abstracts, APS2010 & SEAsia2010 & GMS2010, August 2-4, 2010, Radisson Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand  
**Keyword** Agriculture; farm; sustainable system

### **Abstract**

ASI (Agribusiness Systems International) is currently implementing a three year project called Sunhara, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, with the goal of helping develop sustainable institutions and climate that will build sustainable systems for empowerment of smallholder farmers in Uttar Pradesh to grow and increase their income. Sunhara has three key objectives to address farmers' constraints and leverage opportunities to meet market demand:

Objective 1: Farmer Outreach will build self sustainable extension systems to increase farmer productivity through improved production and post-harvest practices.

Objective 2: Marketing Interventions will develop more efficient and profitable marketing models using a variety of distribution channels.

Objective 3: Women of Substance will address gender inequity issues in India's agricultural sector by providing women with information, access to finance, and technology to create sources of female-managed on-farm income through advanced farming and processing of fresh fruits and vegetables.

The advent of the green revolution has also made agriculture input intensive and externally dependent. In order to meet these demands, state controlled extension services were strengthened. These services, however, were, in general, chemical input intensive, natural resource exploiting and addressed larger and male farmers. As the needs and priorities of marginal, landless and women farmers varies largely from those of big farmers, the majority of farmers got neglected in such extension support mechanisms and remained isolated from new technologies and agricultural methods.

The Sunhara approach to addressing this issue is to leverage interest of private sector and other relevant organizations into approaching extension work as a potentially profitable business opportunity, or a valuable contribution to their existing business model of operations. By providing targeted, tangible, fee-based services to farmers, they will effectively facilitate access to necessary resources, market oriented farming, soil recovery and preservation and more efficient farming practices. The most critical output that will emerge from this new strategy will be an expanding group of farmers that are learning new technical, management and organizational skills, and number of commercial and NGO organization embracing it as a part of their operational development.