

**Extension services through Mobile telephony and internet: The National  
Farmers Information Service in Kenya**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Public extension service remains the most reliable for the 4.5 million smallholder farmers, pastoralists and fisher-folk in Kenya who form 13% of the population. Current extension outreach is 2.1 million smallholders per year through Common Interest Groups (CIGs), Self Help Groups (SHGs), Extension Groups (EGs), field days, demonstrations, exchange visits and individual targeting. Hence, 2.4 million smallholders are not reached at all yet they are Kenyans who have a right of access to public extension services. Innovative ways were needed to have the majority if not all farmers reached by extension services to enable them to make a positive contribution to agricultural productivity that remains the economic mainstay of the country. This is made possible by the positive response on the use of mobile phones by all Kenyans including the illiterate, young and old. Why not take advantage of this opportunity on telephone and internet technologies to reach this enthusiastic population to pass agricultural information for enterprise production and marketing to contribute to food security and poverty reduction. Farmers easily get critical agricultural information for application at the right time that they need it. The National Farmers Information Service (NAFIS) is an electronically generated voice information service for providing farmers with agricultural extension packages through mobile telephony and internet. It is a Government extension service currently in English and Kiswahili languages with room to accommodate other languages. It is easy to use and requires minimal training. There are no extra charges beyond the normal telephone and internet charges. It can be updated with site-specific information by frontline extension officers. Quality assurance is guaranteed through in-built alerts. Feedback mechanisms are in place for response through emails. Farmers get agricultural information by dialing the NAFIS number (02047NAFIS – 0204762347) on their mobile phones. Detailed information is accessible by browsing the NAFIS website [www.nafis.go.ke](http://www.nafis.go.ke).

**Key words:** Extension Service, NAFIS, Collaboration, Mobile Telephony and Internet