A vibrant livestock sector that seeks to achieve high production and productivity with distinct contribution to national economic development needs access and use of a wide range of services. These services include preventive health, clinical care, drug supplies, feed and fodder, breeding services, livestock research and extension and other market related services. These services are critical for boosting livestock productivity and enabling livestock keepers tap into the growing and expanding market for livestock products and ultimately increasing their income.

The Government of Uganda undertook a number of reforms in the late 1990’s that led to the adoption of liberalisation, privatisation, and decentralisation policy regimes. These fundamental policy shifts resulted in a substantial reduction in public sector roles in most sectors including agriculture and the livestock sub-sector. While the Ministry of Animal Resources had initiated the liberalisation process by divesting itself off the role of veterinary drug supply, dispensing and administration as early as 1976, it had retained its responsibility of providing veterinary extension services.

After 1989 MAAIF, further divested itself of clinical veterinary services and to a certain extent veterinary extension, passing on the responsibility for the above services to the private sector. The assumption was that the private sector would thrive without being crowded out by the public sector.

In 2001, the government, through the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), developed the National Policy for the Delivery of Veterinary Services that categorized veterinary services into those that are public, private and or both. This policy shift contributed to the creation of NAADS, as a framework that provided opportunities to stimulate market based extension service provision.

The modalities of operation where extension services were paid for by the public sector but delivered by private sector based extension workers envisaged enticement of private sector based professionals to provide extension services along side other supply of essential inputs demanded by a growing livestock sector.

Ten years down its implementation, the NAADS program has yielded mixed results; extra ordinary performance on one hand and cries for change on the other especially in livestock sector. For
The government policy reforms of downsizing in early 1990's, also led to a ban on recruitment of additional veterinary professionals, thus greatly reducing provision of extension services by the public sector (Table 1). On average each public veterinarian is responsible for 1,801 households (Table 1). Considering the number of households with livestock, the distances they have to travel and the inadequate facilitation, it is difficult for these public veterinarians to provide an efficient and effective service across the country. Because of the weak linkages among the various veterinary services and their sparsely dispersed nature they failed to fill the gap left by the public sector.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) particularly those engaged in the dairy sector such as Heifer Project International (HPI), Send a Cow and others are however still providing various services across the country to farmers. Because of the weak linkages among the various veterinary services and their sparsely dispersed nature they failed to fill the gap left by the public sector.

The structure of veterinary services at the local government (district) level is not clear. In some districts public veterinary officers were contracted for the extension services while the public sector pays for the activities contracted. NAADS staff may provide assistance to the districts when called upon by the respective district veterinary officers if they have time. The structure of veterinary services at the local government (district) level is not clear. In some districts public veterinary officers were contracted for the extension services while the public sector pays for the activities contracted. NAADS staff may provide assistance to the districts when called upon by the respective district veterinary officers if they have time.

As a result, the public could not finance veterinary extension services if the district did not select livestock as the priority enterprise. Furthermore veterinary extension workers contracted by NAADS are not responsible for the particular enterprises selecting livestock services that are not selected uncared for. For example if a districts selects dairy livestock, the NAADS staff would be contracted to provide extension service for these two leaving out poultry and beef enterprises. In practice NAADS staff may provide assistance to the districts when called upon by the respective district veterinary officers if they have time. The structure of veterinary services at the local government (district) level is not clear. In some districts public veterinary officers were contracted for the extension services while the public sector pays for the activities contracted. NAADS staff may provide assistance to the districts when called upon by the respective district veterinary officers if they have time.

Veterinary Extension Services

Establishment of the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) policy in 2001 sought to empower all farmers to access and utilize contracted agricultural advisory services. NAADS was set up to aid the gradual transition from public delivery to private delivery of extension services, and to further strengthen the private sector extension services. Under NAADS the private sector is responsible for delivery of veterinary extension services while the public sector pays for the activities contracted respectively (Table 1). Considering the number of households with livestock, the distances they have to travel and the inadequate facilitation, it is difficult for these public veterinarians to provide an efficient and effective service across the country. Because of the weak linkages among the various veterinary services and their sparsely dispersed nature they failed to fill the gap left by the public sector.

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Veterinary Extension Services

Veterinary extension services have a significant public good component that warrants them to remain the responsibility of the public sector. Since the private sector has not yet fully taken over the provision of veterinary extension services, there is need for the country to review the policy on recruitment of public sector extension workers.

Currently as shown in Table 1 above, districts have limited and varying numbers of veterinary and para-veterinary professionals to provide the much needed extension service. This is attributed to the lack of an agreed structure for the local government veterinary service. Private extension workers in the districts are also very few. There is need for MAFF and the Ministry of Public Service to agree on a structure to be adopted for local government veterinary services. Once agreed, staff should be recruited to fill the positions.

Poultry enterprises also require professional services. Deliberate efforts should be made to impart skills to livestock farmers through practical training on livestock husbandry practices of livestock farmers. As seen in the crop sector, livestock farmers can be trained to provide veterinary extension services via farmer networks by strengthening the capacity to channel veterinary extension support services via farmer groups such as co-operatives and associations.

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peer learning. NGOs like SNV, Send a Cow Uganda and Heifer Project International have successfully pioneered this approach of farmer-to-farmer training in the crop sector. In some districts such farmers are now being contracted by the public sector to provide extension services in areas where these NGOs do not operate.

Mass media such as the popular FM radios can also be used to widen the veterinary extension information dissemination. Professionals, farmers, NGOs and private input supplier agencies with proven expertise in livestock technologies can bridge the gap for capacity building using these media. Public private partnerships could be explored in financing and executing serialized media programmes in various local languages to disseminate livestock extension messages in a coordinated manner. The MAAIF Directorate of Animal Resources should take the coordination role and spearhead this option.