

Abstract

Has the institution of a Provincial Council system in 1987 enhanced the efficiency of the agricultural service delivery system by public agencies? Evidently, the subsistence farmer, producing agricultural commodities for sale, has not benefited though improved local services by way of timely input supplies or marketing of produce owing to the devolutionary arrangements. The reasons for lack of the anticipated transformation to materialize is not due to devolution *per se*, but due to the haste in adopting uniform prescriptions for all nine sub national units of devolution, which are at various stages of capacity development and the nature of the spatial unit itself.

The ambiguities in the delineation of competencies in the 13th Amendment are compounded by legislative enactments which contradict several Constitutional provisions, administrative circulars as well as the division of physical and human resources between the centre and the Provincial Councils. The responsibility of Provincial Councils for agricultural extension is not supported by village level functionaries who are only accountable to Central departments. At the same time the lack of clarity for agricultural planning and dispersed amongst a large number of Central and Provincial departments and implementation resulted in duplication of efforts, overlapping of functions and consequent lack of accountability possibly leading to wastage of funds. The establishment of Provincial Councils has not produced the institutional innovation at the farm gate level linking the smallholder farmers to well functioning agricultural markets. The unit of devolution which is the Province, has been carved out regardless of the spatial dimension required for a development orientation.