

***Virtual Extension and Research
Communication Network
(VERCON) in Egypt:
Linking Extension and
Research***

Prof. Mohamed Shafie Sallam

Dr. Mohamed Hassan Kassem

Agricultural Extension and Rural Development

Research Institute

VERCON is an information and communication network that supports research/extension interaction and flow of information.

VERCON supplements the established system with the convenience of Internet access for the transmission, retrieval, and provision of information, and a variety of electronic communication avenues for linking people within and between extension and research.

Steps taken to establish the VERCON in Egypt



VERCON was established with the following steps in three main phases:

- *Planning Phase*
- *Implementation phase*
- *Monitoring and evaluation*

Planning Phase

- ☞ Mapping the organizational structure of research and extension as well as formal organizational linkages. (AERDRI)**
- ☞ Assessment of information needs and flow. (AERDRI)**
- ☞ Review of existing communication channels and media (documents, prints, video, face to face, telephone, fax, etc.). (AERDRI)**
- ☞ Allocate management nodes in the natural research/extension system. (AERDRI)**

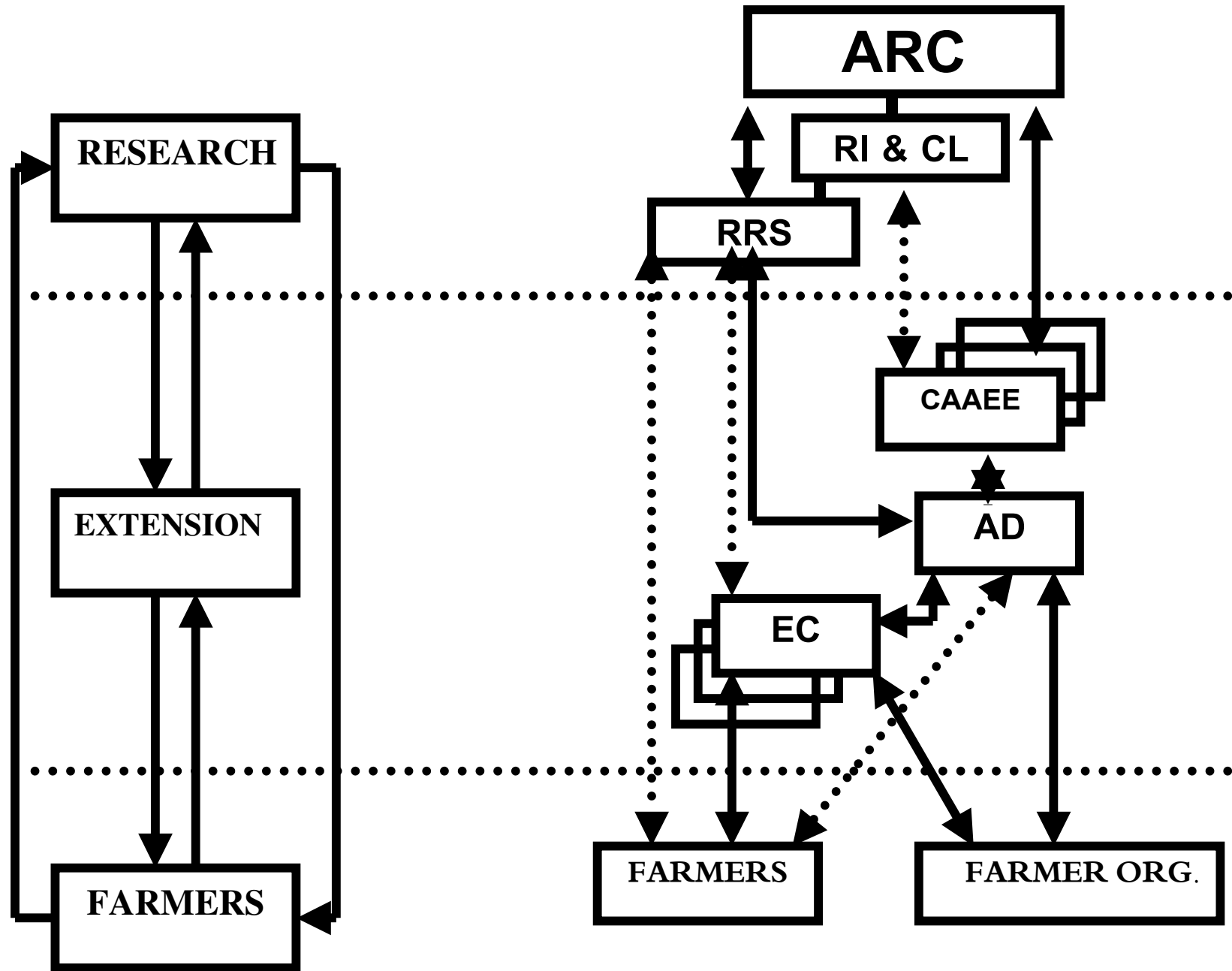
- ➡ Assessment of hardware and telecommunication (Internet) facilities and availability within the existing system. (AERDRI & CLAES)**
- ➡ Initial sketch of the virtual network. (AERDRI & CLAES)**
- ➡ Develop a framework, roles, and regulations for VERCON operation and for each site. (AERDRI & CLAES)**
- ➡ Software assessment and design. (AERDRI & CLAES)**

Implementation phase

- 🔔 Hardware purchase and installation. (CLAES)**
- 🔔 Review of available software**
- 🔔 Integration of available software and development of VERCON specific software. (CLAES)**
- 🔔 Capacity building. (AERDRI & CLAES)**
- 🔔 Software validation and verification. (AERDRI & CLAES)**
- 🔔 Uploading and network launching. (CLAES)**
- 🔔 Publicity. (AERDRI)**

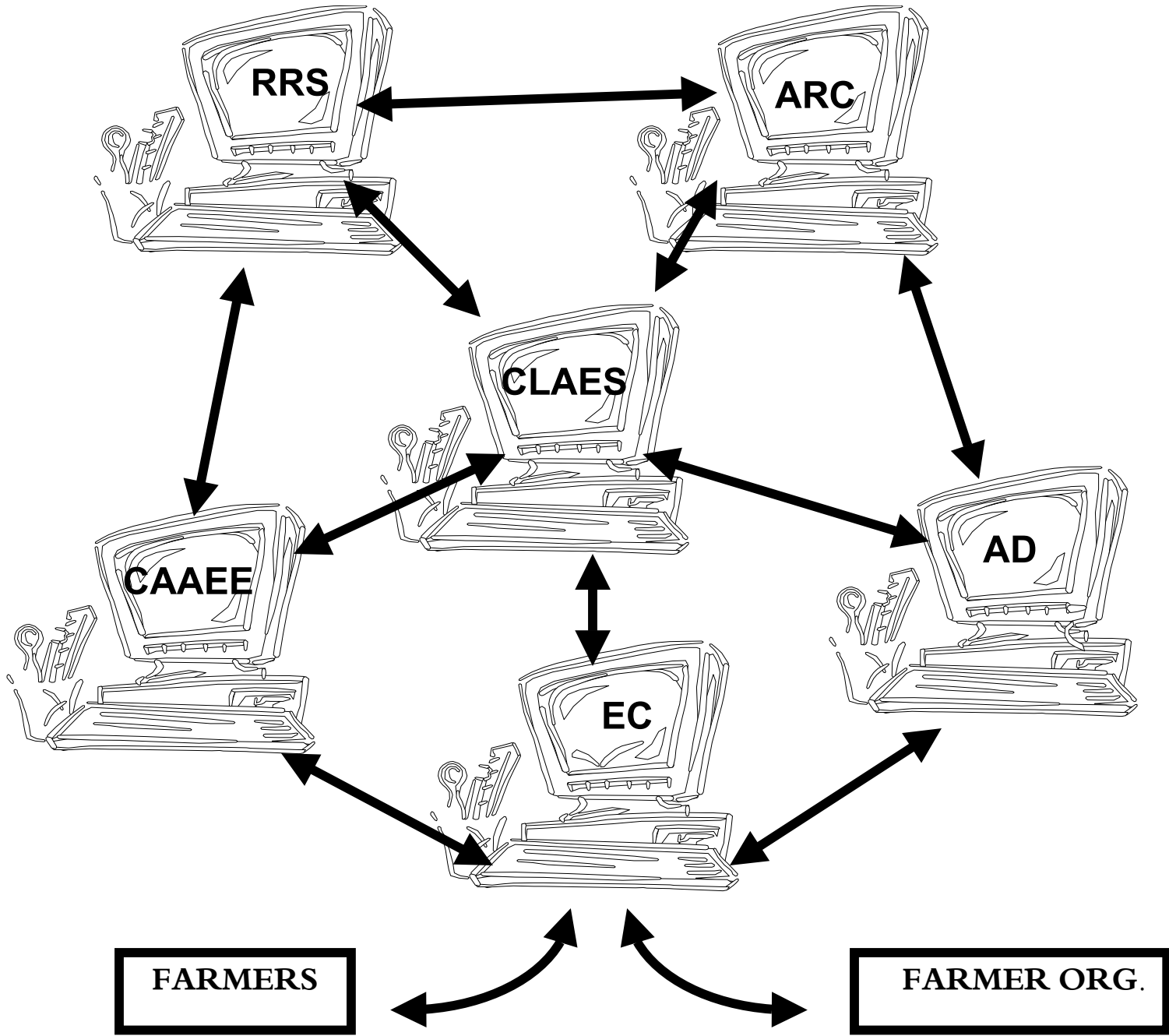
Monitoring and evaluation

- ” Monitoring of software and hardware. (CLAES)**
- ” Monitoring of agricultural information flow. (AERDRI)**
- ” Regulating updates. (managed by authorized sites)**



Example of the kinds of information exchanged in an EIS: Kafr El-Shiekh Governorate case in Egypt

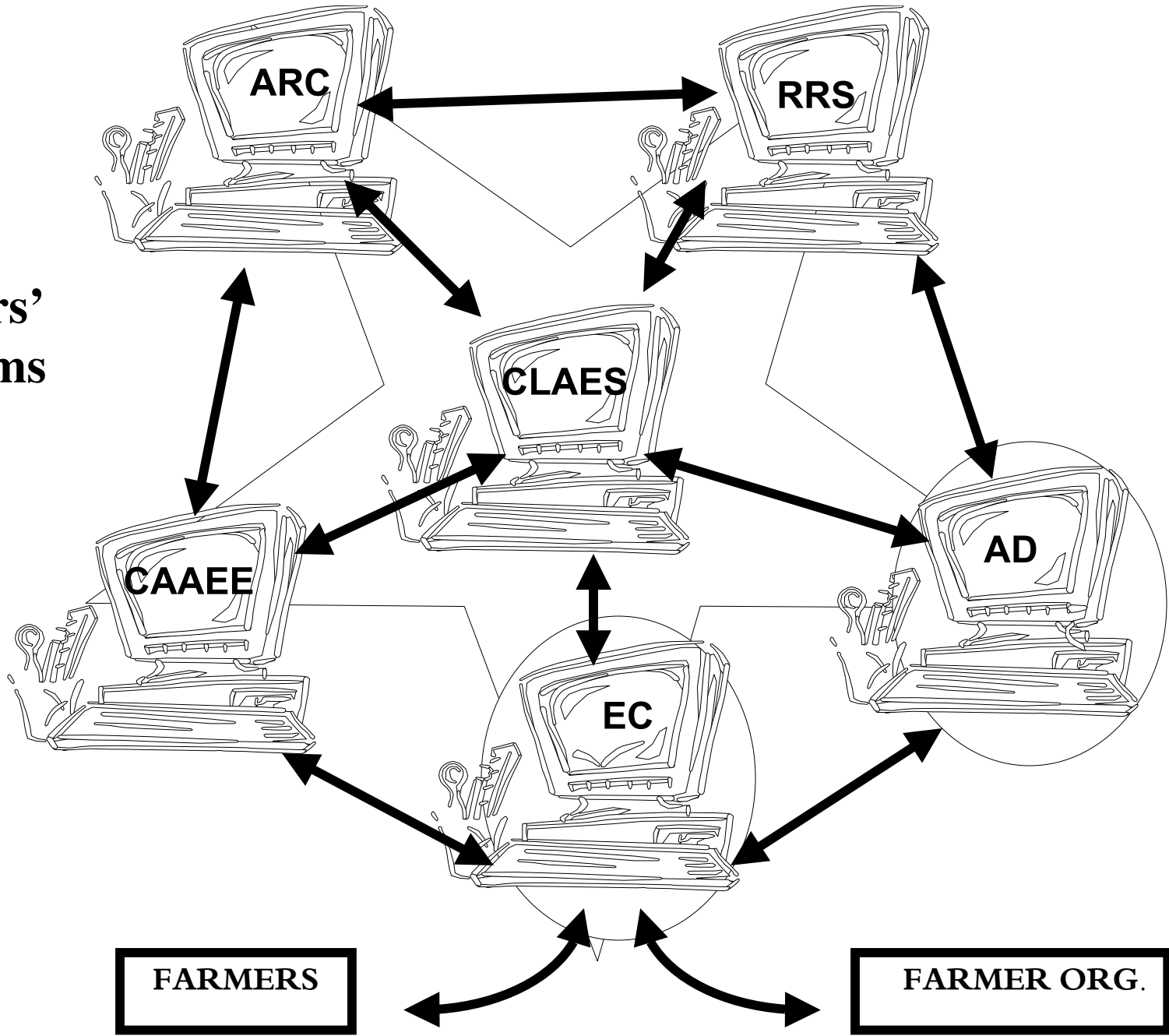
| | To | Extension Center (EC) | Agricultural Directorate (AD) | Regional Research Station (RRS) | Central Admin. of Agric. Extension Service (CAAES) |
|-------|----|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| From | | | | | |
| EC | | | | | ↑ |
| AD | | | | → | Problems facing farmers. |
| RRS | | | | | |
| CAAES | | | | | |




Farmer problems could be categorized in three types:

- **administration**
- **production or,**
- **marketing.**

**Farmers'
Problems**



- **The VERCON pilot has successfully demonstrated that the system and its users can improve linkages between research and extension in 8 pilot nodes (now 30 nodes).**
- **It now forms the basis for creating a national electronic agricultural knowledge and information network.**
- **VERCON addresses the needs of small-scale Egyptian farmers through the continuous flow of information from agricultural research through extension and ultimately to the end-users, farmers themselves.**



As our experience to-date indicates, new features may be a long way, but once implemented the pay-off is immediate.