

Journal of Agricultural Research and Policies, Volume 11, Number 1, 2016**AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION PROVISION TO FARMERS BY AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN IPINSA COMMUNITY, AKURE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ONDO STATE**

Oni, Omotade O.
University Library
Federal University of Technology, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Agriculture has been the main stay of Nigeria as a nation. It is necessary that people mostly farmers who are into this profession need adequate and effective information to boost agricultural productivity. The agency that is mostly involved in this information provision is locally located agricultural development programme offices. The study investigated agricultural information needs by rural farmers from Agricultural Development Programme in their area. The purpose was to examine the presence of agricultural development Programme agents in the study area, the types of information needs by sampled farmers. The study surveyed one hundred respondents using questionnaire and response rate was ninety-six. The study revealed that there was no presence of Agricultural extension workers indicated by 81.25%. It was gathered in the study that commercial type of information was mostly needed by farmers, fifty-two responded with 54.16% and this was closely followed by Technical Information with thirty-four responses, indicating 35.42%. Among the information on plant protection chemicals, Herbicides had highest responses of fifty-six(58.33%) and followed by pesticides with thirty-two responses (33.33%). The sampled farmers also indicated information on improved crop varieties. It was revealed that crops with resistance to diseases had the highest with thirty-six (37.50%). Farmers also need information on credit facilities from concerned Agricultural program agency. Loan with no interest with fifty-eight responses was the highest with 60.42%. Recommendations were made towards effective delivering of needed information to farmers in the area of restructuring agricultural agencies for farmers to have close access to them. As part of recommendations, enforcement of regular meetings of concerned agricultural agencies with farmers should be upheld with provision of effective feed-back channels to monitor the activities of these agencies, among others..

Keywords: *Agricultural Extension Workers, Agricultural Development Programme, Agricultural Information Services.*

INTRODUCTION

Information has been seen to be a major factor of production in any sector. It is seen to be a tool that oil the engine of production process. Information service is the provision of information to assuage the information thirst of user's. It entails giving personal assistance to users with the objectives of meeting their information needs. Information service improved a man's life and the services available to him. Every profession needs information from a source seem to provide needed information to the target users. Agriculture as a major sector in any economy needs information which help to increase their production in both quality and quantity. There is a consensus among Nigerian policy makers and experts in agriculture that the wealth of the country can substantially be derived from agricultural production, processing and export.

It has been reported that 94.37 percent of all farm holdings in Nigeria before this time were small scale farms, (Ozuwa, 1995). It is observed that these small scale farmers who are central to the realization of this expectation are generally uneducated, poor and has limited access to agricultural inputs and modern farming implements. There are numerous agricultural research institutes all over the country owned by government, which are saddled with the responsibilities of providing information needs of farmers which are mostly in rural areas. It has been observed that, the performance of the agricultural sub-sector of the Nigeria economy is below expectation despite the existence of many agricultural research agencies.

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Idachaba (2000) attributed this unfortunate scenario partly to inadequate provision of information to target users who are the farmers which is largely due to weakness in the agricultural information delivery system. In Ozowa remarks, that Nigerian farmers hardly feel the impact of agricultural innovations either because they have no access to needed presence of nearest agricultural agency or because information provided is poorly disseminated.

In modern agriculture, extension workers are seen in agricultural agencies in which they are the link in between the researcher and the farmers. They are responsible to transmit agricultural research findings and new products developed by researchers to the farmers. This in turn, provide farmers with skills, education and improved technologies that would help them make effective farm practices, Williams (1997). In other words, agricultural development Programme links all the components of the agricultural system and provides for better operation and survival of the system in a competitive environment. There is a clear relationship between information, agriculture and development. Information provided together with the inputs, markets, infrastructure and credits forms the needed ingredients for agricultural development .It would not be out of contest, that agricultural development is based on information and information transfer, Pertini et al. (1998). Ozowa (1995) simply identify the types of information that farmers in rural areas in Nigeria need. These are information on production technology, credit and marketing. He further stated that, farmers need to be provided information on sources of loans, location of lending institutions, interest rates, amount of credit available and mode of payment .The development , which includes agriculture in society depends on the availability and access to accurate and reliable information . To this end Munyua (1999) stated that small scale farmers require information in supply of inputs, new technologies, early warning systems for drought, pest, diseases and so on. Ekoja(2003) noted that, farmers' access to information in Nigeria found that farmers in rural areas are not having access to adequate and relevant information from their nearest Agricultural Development Programme agency. Generally, agricultural information delivery to most rural farmers is largely ineffective, Alemma(1995). This is attributed largely to ineffective information delivery system occasioned by the inability of extension workers to work at the village level.

It is always necessary to periodically investigate the extent to which farmers are exposed to agricultural information and their opinions with regards to the adequacy of such information . This was the issue investigated by this study with specific reference to farmers in the selected community.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study is carried out to achieve the following objectives:

1. The presence of extension workers in their community .
2. The types of information on credit facilities.
3. Information on plant protection chemicals.
4. Information on improved crop varieties.
5. Information on Agricultural Cooperative Societies.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Agricultural Development Programme: This is an agency or a body that is responsible in the application of Agricultural scientific research and new knowledge to Agricultural practices through farmer education.

Agricultural Extension Agent or Worker: This is someone that has required information on new Agricultural practices needed by farmers and disseminated through farmer education.

Community: The population of sampled farmers that have contact with Agricultural Extension workers.

Information: A processed Agricultural Information Data that need to be communicated to farmers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Information is widely used in people's daily activities to refer to knowledge, message, news, data, documents, intelligence and what is gathered by some agencies. Information source therefore, is usually an enterprise from which an organization acquires information externally in a wide variety of package form, Popoola (2002). Igbeka and Atinmo (2002) described information as a tool that is important in the realization of any objective or goals set by any sector.

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Agricultural sector of the economy is majorly dominated by farmers who are operating on small scale and are in rural areas. These farmers need presence and impact of agricultural development agencies where needed information is provided. Sabo (2007) in her study identified improved seedlings, fertilizer, insecticide, pesticide, post-harvest processing of farm produce, credit etc. as types of agricultural information needs of farmers.

The aforementioned types of agricultural information and agricultural information needs of farmers, especially in an information dependent sector like agriculture, where there are new and rather complex problems facing farmers everyday. Agricultural development agency is the most important agent of information transfer to farmers in their locality.

AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION SERVICES

Agricultural information is an aggregate of facts that give farmers the knowledge and required skills to produce at their optimum knowledge. Aboyade(1997) stated that agricultural information may be published or unpublished knowledge on all aspects of information needed by farmers. However, needed information should be recognized and provided by agricultural development agency to farmers.

Russel(1985) classified agricultural information that could be gotten from concerned agency into the following categories:

1. Technically scientific information, which arises from research institutions aimed at increased production and productivity through provision of better agro inputs, new principles and techniques.
2. Commercial information which includes information on credits, co-operatives, agro based products .
3. Social information that provides information on local culture, agricultural production development etc.
4. Legal information, which relates to possible and known legislation on the use of law.

The information got from outside the vicinity of farmers should be from agricultural extension workers who are considered as an epitomic of agricultural bases knowledge .

Agricultural information has been produced in various forms by different institutions, hence the establishment of agricultural development Programme which is solely responsible in providing agricultural information services to farmers in rural communities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**RESEARCH DESIGN**

A descriptive survey design was used for this study . The design involves a planned collection of data from field and it is a relatively simple and besides, it is an easy method of investigation in this research work. The population of this study comprises only farmers living and farming in Ipinsa Community of Ifedore Local Government Area, Ondo State. A random sampling technique was used to select 100 farmers among farmers in the community. These farmers are the ones who reside and farm in Ipinsa community.

Research Instrument

The research instrument for this work were both oral interview and questionnaire which were administered to sampled farmers who reside and farm in the community used for the study . The research instruments were made to give room for familiarity and to get responses to the research objectives. The distribution of questionnaires and responses were done in such a way to guide sampled farmers and researchers in filling and recording the questionnaires and responses respectively.

Data Collection Procedure

A total of one hundred questionnaires were given (100) out to sampled farmers ,Ninety –six were retrieved and found useful for this study . This was achieved as a result of proper monitoring of the administered questionnaires by the researchers.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analysis using frequencies counts, percentages and tables to show the responses of the respondents and were used to draw inferences.

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DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The presence of Extension workers in the community.

Table 1: Presence of Extension workers in the community

Presence of Extension workers	No of Responses	Percentage Distribution
Yes	18	18.75
No	78	81.25
Total	96	100.00

From **table 1** above, 78(81.25%) of the sampled farmers indicated that there is no presence of extension workers in the community to meet farmers while 18(18.75%) respondents among the sampled farmers claimed that, there is presence of extension workers in the community.

Table 2: Type of information required by farmers

Type of information	No of Responses	Percentage Distribution
Technical Information	34	35.42
Commercial Information	52	54.16
Social Information	6	6.25
Legal Information	4	4.17
Total	96	100.00

Table 2 shows the type of information required by farmers from representatives of nearest Agricultural Development Agency who are majorly Agricultural extension workers. Fifty-two respondents represented by 52.16% indicated that they need commercial information from Agricultural Development Agency while thirty –four responses made their expression known that they need Technical Information from Agricultural Development Agency which represents 35.42% . Social information and legal information required by farmers from nearest Agricultural Agency indicated that six of the respondents, represented by 6.25% require social information in respect to local culture and other norms of the land which four of the sampled farmers indicated that they need legal information and this is the lowest represented by 4.17%.

Table 3: Information on plant protection chemicals

Plant protection chemicals	No of Responses	Percentage Distribution
Herbicides	56	58.33
Fungicides	5	5.21
Germicides	3	3.13
Pesticides	32	33.33
Total	96	100.00

Table 3 reveals information on plant protection chemicals which farmers want from Agricultural Development Agency which should send their extension workers to communities to meet farmers about their needs for improved agricultural productivity. The table shows that fifty-six respondents which is 58.33% indicated that they require information on herbicides and thirty –two of the respondent expressed their interest of receiving information from Agricultural Development Agency if available .This was represented by 5.21% and 3.13% respectively.

Journal of Agricultural Research and Policies, Volume 11, Number 1, 2016**Table 4:** Information on improved crop varieties

Crop Varieties	No of responses	Percentage Distribution
Crop resistant to diseases	36	37.50
Crop with early maturity	28	29.17
Crop of high productivity	26	27.08
Crop with increased nutrition value	6	6.25
Total	96	100.00

Table 4 shows distribution of responses on information needed by farmers in the area of improved crop varieties from their Agricultural Development Agency. The table indicates that thirty-six farmers, which is represented by 37.50% want information on crop resistant to diseases. Information on crops with early maturity and of high productivity are very closed. These were represented by twenty-eight and twenty-six with 29.17% and 27.08% respectively. As the table reveals, least of the information needed by farmers on improved crop varieties is crop with increased nutrition value. This is represented with six responses with 6.25%.

Table 5: Information on credit facilities

Statement on credit facilities	No of responses	Percentage Distribution
Long term loan	25	5.21
Short term loan	31	32.29
Loan with no interest	58	60.42
Loan with no collateral	2	2.18
Loan with collateral	Nil	Nil
Total	96	100.00

Table 5 displays the distribution of respondents on credit facilities that could be available to them and the manner the credit could be offered to them. The table indicates that most of the farmers want information from responsible agricultural agency to have access to loan that will attract no interest. This is indicated with fifty-eight respondents with 60.42%. This statement is closely followed by looking for information on short term loan. Thirty-one respondents indicated their interest on this type of loan and represented by 32.29%. Many farmers sampled do not have interest in accessing information on loan with long term. This is indicated with five responses and represented with 5.21%. This is also indicated that, respondents do not need agricultural information on loan that needs to do with collateral. Only two respondents indicated that they need information on loan that may require collateral and is represented by 2.18%.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

The part of the roles of Agricultural Agency is to provide information of agricultural value to farmers who then improve agricultural productivity. It has already been noted that, information is a vital factor in production. In this study, an attempt was made to carry out the awareness of the presence of agricultural agency and the type of information farmers need from concerned agricultural agency. It was revealed majority of the sampled farmers indicated that Agricultural extension workers who supposed to be in contact with them do not come to them. Top on the type of information farmers want from Agricultural extension workers is commercial information as indicated in Table 2. This is closely followed by Technique information. Social and legal information was also sought from Agricultural extension workers respectively.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made through the findings from this study.

1. Agricultural Agencies should be structured in the areas of location for farmers to have close access to them.
2. Efforts should be made by concerned authority to have feedback from farmers about the presence of Agricultural extension workers in their community.
3. Regular meeting of farmers and extension workers from concerned agency should be enforced.
4. Effective awareness on useful agricultural information to farmers through mass media should be put in place.
5. Extension workers should work hand-in –hand with village head or farmers representatives to pass across vital information to farmers in all communities.

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