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SOURCES OF AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION AMONG BENEFICIARY FARMERS OF THE VALUE-CHAIN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at investigating the sources of agricultural information among farmers' beneficiaries of the value-chain development programme, the constraints to accessing agricultural information among the farmers. Literatures were reviewed on value-chain development programmes and agricultural information. The study area for the study was the four agricultural zones of Anambra State Nigeria. One hundred rice farmers were selected as sample for data collection from the population of one thousand, one hundred and ten beneficiaries of the value chain development programme in Anambra State. The data collected was analyzed through the percentage method. The study reveals that most of the farmers source for agricultural information through only three major ways namely co-farmers, friends, and relatives and agro-inputs stores and that the farmer are confronted with the challenges of improper timing of media agricultural programmes, inability to comprehend media language among others . It was recommended among others that media programmes on agriculture should be scheduled at the time appropriate to the farmers and the native/local languages of the farmers should be used in instruction.

Keywords: Sources; Agriculture; Information; Beneficiary Farmers; Value-Chain; Development Programme

Introduction

Agriculture is associated with the production of basic food crops and domestic animals. hallison, (1993) noted that agriculture and farming are synonymous as long as farming was not commercialized but as the process of economic development accelerated, many more other occupations allied to arming came to be a part of agriculture. Today, marketing, processing distribution of agricultural products are all accepted as a part of modern agriculture thereby making the meaning of agriculture to wider in scope Farmkline, 2000). Agriculture may also be defined as the production, Processing, marketing and distribution of crops and livestock products Hufnann, 2006). Agricultural is also defined as the art or science of production of crops

and livestock on farm. Nevertheless, either some or portion of a population must be involved in Agriculture in other to ensure food supply for the population (Arcand, 2000). Simons, (2002) stated that despite the immeasurable benefits of agriculture to any society, its development is retarded by certain factors of which inadequate access to agricultural education is one of them.

Agriculture is viewed as a vital means through which food insecurity poverty and unemployment can be addressed and one of the long-term strategies conceived so far for its development is to improve on the availability and access to quantitative and qualitative agricultural education which is transmitted to the practicing farmers in the form of agricultural information. Obiora, (2016) noted that in order to achieve the goals of sustainable Agricultural productivity in Nigeria, it is imperative to ensure adequate provision of agricultural information.

Rice Value-Chain in Nigeria

Rice is an important staple food in Nigeria and it is grown in all the States of the Federation and Federal Capital Territory though production and varies from State to State and the prevalent types of rice production systems in Nigeria include rain-fed upland, rain-fed lowland, irrigated lowland, deep water floating and mangrove swamp (Chukwudebelu, Igwe and Madukasi, 2015). As a cereal grain, it is the most widely consumed staple food for a large part of the world's human population, especially in Asia (Awika, 2011) and it is one of the commodities sugarcane and maize. According to Shrestha (2012), rice is more than just a food, as it plays a key role in food security, while at the same time South-East Asian nations have become the leading rice exporting countries. In most countries, rice cultivation has become the major activity and sources of income for millions of households around the globe. According to Kadiri. Eze, Orebiyi, Lemchi, Ohajianya and Nwaiwu (2014), rice is an increasingly important crop in Nigeria and it is relatively easy to produce for sale and home consumption. In some areas, there is a long tradition of rice growing, but for many, it is considered a luxury food for special occasions only. In terms of comparative advantage, rice can be grown in flooded and non-flooded soils because it has both lowland and upland varieties that can adapt to different agro-climatic and soil conditions (Aja and Aja, 2014).

According to Merem, Twumasi, Wesley, Isokpehi, Shenge, et al (2017), rice in most of the African countries constitutes a bigger portion of the diet on regular basis. Aside a handful of nations that enjoy self-sufficiency in rice cultivation, rice consumption surpasses its production and substantial amount of the crop are imported to sustain local demand at the expense of hard- earned foreign currency reserves. Rice is virtually cultivated in most of the agro-ecological Zones of the country, as it constitutes one major cereal crop produced by an average Nigerian farmer. According to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2018), Nigeria is the continent's leading consumer of rice, one of the largest producers of rice in Africa and simultaneously one of the largest rice importers in the world.

According to Global Value Chain Initiative (GVC) (2007) as cited in Ewuzie, Ifediora Anetoh (2020), value chain is an arrangement that describes the linkages of participates their value creating activities that enhance the movement of goods and services from production, processing, marketing to the end user. In agricultural parlance, the term "value chain" is used interchangeably with such terms as supply chain, market system, and agri-food chain, depending on what is being considered. Based on agri-food sector perspective, Drummond and Goodwin (2011), defined value chain as all activities and processes that occur between producers of food and ultimate consumers. According to Donovan, Franzel, Cunha, Gyau and Mithöfer (2015), donor agencies like USAID, FADAMA, and IFAD usage of value chain is in line with World Bank (2010) definition which describes value chain as full range of value adding activities required to bring a product or service through different phases of production including the procurement of raw materials and other input. The concept of value chain was introduced to improve productivity and profitability of the actors in the agricultural sector (Ewuzie, Ifediora and Anetoh, 2020). The notion of agricultural value chain underscores the system approach to value added activities where the action of one component in a system affects every other component within the system.

According to Ugwuonah (2017), the idea of the value chain is relatively new in agricultural sector, it is however, resides at the core of high-impact and sustainable initiatives focused on improving productivity, competitiveness and growth of Small-Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Recently, most of the agricultural intervention programmes, initiated and implemented in agricultural sectors by both government and non-government agencies (donors) take the value chain approach. The value chain approach has shifted focus and emphasis away from agricultural production to consumer demand, marketing and the coordination of product flow from producer to consumer (Ewuzie, et al, 2020). The value chain concept acknowledges that production must be linked to demand and the critical role of organizing the flow from farmer to consumer opportunities must be taken into consideration. A value chain links the steps a product takes from the producer to the consumer. It, therefore, includes research and development, input suppliers, production, processing, marketing and finance (Norton, 2014).

An agricultural value chain starts with the provision of farm inputs which include seed, fertilizer and other agro chemicals used in the cultivation of crops (Rex, 2013). All the inputs are provided by the agro input dealers to the farmer who uses them in the production of agricultural crops and livestock. Whereas, according to Ewuzie, et al, (2020), the production component entails the actual production activities which culminates in the usage of farm inputs in a way that it is prescribed by the agricultural technologies for a particular commodity to produce the required produce. Value chains are created for the better understanding of consumer needs to respond to these requirements in better and more strategic way. The trade components entails exchange and

distribution activities that are carried on at the primary product level by marketing middlemen. Processing has to do with value addition activities which is concerned with the change in form of the produce. Besides these activities that are central to a value chain, the business environment and provision of allied services also affect the value chain and as such constitute part of the value chain. Activities of the various participants in the value chain are expected to increase the value that is added to the products and Shrestha (2012) further opined that participants' conduct along the chain determines the efficiency and return accruing to each participant

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows;

1. To determine the sources of agricultural information to the beneficiaries of the value-chain development programme.
2. To determine the agricultural information challenges facing the beneficiaries of the value-chain development programme.

Research questions

The research questions for the study are;

1. What are the sources of agricultural information to the beneficiaries of the value-chain development programme?
2. What are the agricultural information challenges facing the beneficiaries of the value-chain development programmme?

Agricultural Information

Agricultural information according to Tadesse, (2008) is defined the various sets of information and messages that are relevant to agricultural production activities of farmers such as crop production and protection animal production and management and natural resources production ad conservation. Agricultural information therefore, refers to agriculture related data which are transformed into meaningful and useful contexts or forms for effective decision making in agriculture or farming related activates Emmanuel, Yusufu, Sheriff and Shehu, (2016), Observes that agricultural information services contribute significantly to agricultural production.

Through agricultural information farmers can adopt new technologic or farming systems, know when to plant and harvest, which crop to produce and which animal to rear and where to sell. It is also through agricultural information that farmers can know where to acquire bank loans and other farming inputs, as well as how to control pests and disease. Such information will consequently increase agricultural production and improve the standard of living of farmers. Ekoja, (2000) defines agricultural information as published and unpublished knowledge on all aspects of agriculture which are inter-disciplinary in nature and have universal application.

Aina, (1990) stated that for the agricultural information is inter- disciplinary and therefore classified them under these sets:

- **Technical/scientific information** - this type of agricultural information arises from research and developments work carried out in various agricultural

research institutions including universities.

- Commercial agricultural information this set of information gives enlightment on the marketing of agricultural produce in order to maximize profits.
- **Social** - Cultural agricultural information- This encompasses traditional information on agricultural practices, local cultures, background information on farming communities labour availability etc. This type of information will be useful to policy makers and planners.
- **Legal agricultural information**- this deals with all legislations that affect agriculture such as land tenure, the production distribution and sales of agricultural products. Inspite the investment of the government of Nigeria at different levels on the provision of agricultural knowledge and information to farmers, the knowledge base of farmers is still at its low state as most farmers complain of inadequate knowledge as one of the major problems that hinder agricultural development in the Nigerian society (Ministry of Agriculture, Owerri 2019).

Research Method

The area of the study is Anambra State Nigeria with four agricultural Zones namely Onitsha, Awka, Aguata, and Anambra which cuts across the twenty-one local Government Areas of the State. Population of the study include all the one thousand one hundred and ten beneficiaries of the value-chain development programme in Anamabra State as reported by the document obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture, Awka. **Sample size:** The sample size for the study is the one hundred paddy rice farmers' beneficiaries of the programme. **Method of data collection.** The structured interview technique was adopted in obtaining information from the selected farmers. **Method of data analysis:** The data obtained was analyzed using the percentage method.

Data analysis

Table 1: Sources of Agric information to VCDP beneficiary

Responses	**A**	**D**	**%A**	**%D**
Mass media	4	96	4%	96%
Extension agents	12	88	12%	88%
Public lectures	3	97	3%	97%
Town union meetings	1	99	1%	99%
Religious centres	0	100	0%	100%
Co- farmers	98	2	98%	2%
Agric input stores	89	11	89%	11%
Friends and relatives	92	8	92%	8%
Formal education	5	95	5%	95%
Other sources	2	98	2%	98%

Table 2: Agric information challenges facing VCDP beneficiary farmers

Responses	A	D	%A	%D
Improper timing of media programme	98	2	98%	2%
Inability to comprehend media language	96	4	96%	4%
Inconsistent media message	92	8	92%	8%
Information irrelevant to needs	94	6	94%	6%
Inadequate information personnel	88	12	88%	12%
Inadequate infrasture	75	25	75%	25%

Discussion

The table of data analysis above, most of the beneficiary farmers obtain agricultural information through their co-farmers, agricultural input stories, and friends and relatives while only a few of them get information through the mass media, agricultural extension agents, public lectures, religious centres town union meetings, formal education and other sources that was also discovered that most of the beneficiaries to the V.C.D.P are faced with the challenges of improper timing of media agricultural programme, inability to comprehend media language (communication gap). Inconsistent media messages, information provided are irrelevant to the immediate needs of the farmers, inadequate information personnel and inadequate infrastructure.

Recommendations

From the discovering, made in this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. The power supply in the farming communities and settlements in Anambra state should be upgraded and improved for efficiency so as to enable the farmers easy access to agricultural information.
2. More trained agricultural information personnel showed be employed and development courses should be provided to them periodically.
3. Farmers native/local languages should be used in agricultural information provision and the information should be simple and clearly stated.
4. Agricultural information content should be based on the immediate needs of the farmers (relevant).
5. The agricultural information providers should also be in contact with the farmers and research agencies so as to ensure that well verified information are provided to the farmers.

Conclusion

Agricultural information is imperative for the successful implementation of the value-chain development programmme as it is the major tool for capacity building in agriculture and efficiency of farmers. The various levels of government, non-governmental agencies and individual or corporate bodies showed endeavor to provided well package agricultural information to the right farmers in other to ensure sustainable food security and the sustenance of the programme in Nigeria.

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