

IMPACT OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICES ON AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE RURAL AREAS OF IKONO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF IBIAKU COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to find out how the introduction of extension service has helped to change or influence the activities of rural farmers in Ibiaku, Ikono Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The study population was made up of all the farmers in Ibiaku community. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select five villages at random. Twenty farmers were also selected at random from each of the five selected villages giving a sample size of one hundred. Data were gathered through interview method and structured questionnaire, and analyzed using simple percentage. From the results, it was observed that Agricultural Extension Service has created a tremendous effect in changing or influencing the activities of rural farmers in Ibiaku community. It was recommended among others that the number of extension workers that visit the farmers should be increased and their efforts intensified so that they will be able to reach all the farmers and solve their problems.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture has been in existence from time immemorial. In fact, it is as old as man. Anyanwu, A. and Anyanwu, V. (1978) recorded that according to history, the early man was a wander and fruit gatherer, and depended on wild fruits and animals killed during his hunting expedition for his food. At the same time there was also a desire in man to settle down in a permanent home. So man started planting some of the seeds of the fruits he ate and keeping and taking care of the young of some of the animals he had caught.

Initially, agriculture was only concerned with the tilling of the soil for crop production and rearing of animals, but in the contemporary age, agriculture has passed many stages in development. According to Akinsanmi, (1991) "today, however, the term Agriculture is usually more broadly defined as the production of plants and animals which are useful to man. It covers not only the cultivation of the soil and the feeding and management of crops and livestock, but also the preparation of plant and animal products for use by man, and the disposal of these products by marketing". Agriculture attains this glorious stage through schools and Agricultural Extension Services to the rural farmers. Agricultural Extension is a system of disseminating agricultural information from the research institutes to the farmers within the shortest possible time (Erebor, 1997). More so, rural farmers are trained so as to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge required.

According to Adeniji, (1991) Agricultural Extension programmes in Nigeria started during the colonial era when the country was under British rule. They were initially done using mass methods of extension communication through campaign to encourage people to grow cash crops for export. One of such methods was issuing instructions to the people through their chiefs and village heads. Agricultural research stations were introduced at Moor Plantation, Ibadan to cover the western parts of the country, at Samaru Zaria to cover the Northern parts of the country and Umudike to cover the Eastern parts of the country. These stations were charged with the task of developing crop based on technologies for adoption by the farmers in the various areas.

The agricultural extension Service was then based in the various ministries of Agriculture of the three, former four regions of the country namely, Eastern, Northern, Western and Mid-Western regions. Actual Extension work was located in the field services division or the Ministry headed by a chief Agricultural Assistants and attendants located in the villages. These assistants and attendants

were trained in various schools of Agriculture and farm institutes. Apart from extension organization under the ministries of Agriculture, farm settlement schemes and mixed farming schemes were also initiated.

These were concerned with teaching groups of farmers to adopt more profitable farming methods and technologies, such as the use of ox-drawn ploughs and fertilizers. Most of these schemes had however failure rate. Extension organization and the ministries became very bureaucratic and relatively ineffective. New methods of extension organization were required. This emerged with the setting up of Agricultural Development Projects (ADP) and River Basin and Rural Development Authorities (RBRDA) in the middle of the 1970s. The Agricultural Development Projects were concerned with raising the productivity of farmers by distributing Agricultural inputs from farm service centers located in rural areas. This was backed up by an extension system that teaches the farmers the best way to use the inputs supplied. The Agricultural Development Projects started as pilot projects, but they are now currently projected to cover all parts of the country.

The Agricultural Development Projects have recently adopted the Training and Visit (T&V) system of extension. This involves constant monitoring of farm activities and training of both the extension agents and the farmers. Adeniji, (1991) further explained that the extension agents undergo training workshops every fourth night. They spend the other two weeks training the farmers. It is hoped that both the farmers and the workers become up to date about current farm practices and technologies. The training season are also supposed to provide a forum for the village level extension workers to present the problems of farmers in their area so that appropriate and immediate solutions can be provided.

The River Basin and Rural Development Authority were established to develop agriculture and the water resource of the country. They were later assigned the task of making contributions to the rural development of the country. They were expected to lay the foundation for agricultural self-sufficiency by promoting both rain fed and irrigated agriculture. Adeniji (1991) embroidered that extension programme be brought to the rural farmers by Agricultural Extension agents at their homes or villages. He further listed out the aims of Agricultural Extension as follows:

- a. To bring information to the farmers concerning new innovations which can be applied to increase Agriculture production, such as the use of fertilizers, improved breeds of livestock, improved crops varieties, animal feeds, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and farm mechanization.

- b. To instruct farmers on new farming techniques such as the most ideal time of planting, fertilizer application, drainage and irrigation, crop rotation and livestock production and basic soil conservation principles.
- c. To teach farmers good farm management practices, efficient marketing channels, better processing, storage, grading and transportation of Agricultural produce.
- d. To encourage leadership qualities and co-operative living among farmers to enable them adopt new ideas.
- e. To raise the social status of the farmers through basic health education.

This study is necessary by the obvious fact that food is one of the basic necessities of life and Agriculture is wholly and entirely concerned with the production, processing and distribution of food for man. Another importance factor is that schools and extension service are being described as the most important instrument of change. Based on this factor, the researcher is curious to find out how far the introduction of extension service has helped to change or influence the activities of farmers in Ibiaku Ikono local Government Area of Akwa Ibom. Also to find out whether:

- a. Agricultural Extension service has led to increase or decrease in food production.
- b. Agricultural Extension service has helped to reduce the conservation attitude of farmers.
- c. Educated farmers are more successful in boosting Agricultural Productivity than illiterate farmers.
- d. Farmers who enjoy the service of Extension workers and those who live near government established agricultural institutes perform better as regards Agriculture.

For the purpose of the study the following research questions were formulated.

- a. Does Agricultural Extension service led to increase in food production?
- b. Does Agricultural Extension service reduce the conservation attitude of the farmer?
- c. Are educated farmers more successful in boosting Agricultural production than the illiterate ones?
- d. Do farmers who live near government established Agricultural institutes perform better as regards Agriculture?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the survey design in 2008 to find out how the introduction of extension service help to change or influence the activities of

rural farmers in Ibiaku, Ikono Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Ibiaku community is made up of nineteen villages, out of which five were randomly selected for the study. The five selected villages were Itak, Ibam Eto, Mbia Obong, Mbiabet, and Mbia Okpo. Twenty farmers each from the five selected villages were randomly selected for the administration of questionnaire making a total of one hundred respondents. Interview method was also employed in collecting data. Responses from the questionnaire were analyzed using simple percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that farmer's in the study area are mainly aged men and women. Table 2 shows that a greater proportion of the farmers are female. Only one tenth of the farmers in the study area are commercial farmers (table 3). From table 4, it can be seen that greater proportion of the farmers are illiterate. The analysis on table 5 proves that 68.0% of agricultural extension service led to increase in food production. This shows that extension services have made positive impact on food consumption. Therefore, the hypothesis that Agricultural Extension service led to increase in food production is accepted. Analysis according to table 6, reveals whether Agricultural Extension service has reduced the conservation and the attitude of farmers in food production. 12.0% of the sampled population of the farmers did not regard Agricultural Extension Service, this still uphold their conservative attitude towards farming. On the other hand 86.3% disagreed that Agricultural Extension Service has reduced farmer's conservative attitude.

The analysis shows that 79.0% of the sampled population of the farmers believed that living close to agricultural establishment centres and constant contact with agricultural personnel or extension agents increase productivity while only 21% disagreed. In confirmation with table 7, table 8 indicates that 55.5% of the respondents agreed that educated farmers are more successful in boosting Agricultural products than the illiterate ones. Therefore, it is proved that farmers who live near government established agricultural institutes perform better as regards to Agriculture. in the final analysis, farmers from Ibiaku rural area are: (a) mainly aged people, (b) majority of the farmers are females, (c) more of subsistence farming, and (d) mainly people with little or no formal educational background.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conformity with the findings from the data analysis, it was concluded that Agricultural Extension Service has led to increase in food production as such has reduced the conservation attitude of the farmers. Also, educated farmers are more successful in boosting Agricultural production than the illiterate's ones. Farmers who live near government established agricultural institutes perform better as regards the agricultural productivity. Based on the above, the following recommendations is believed will help in solving the problems connected with Agricultural Extension Service and also help the farmers in boosting more agricultural products.

1. The number of Extension workers that visit the farmers should be increased and their efforts intensified so that they will be able to reach all the farmers and solve their problems.
2. Adult education should be encouraged and the farmers made to see the need of attending such programmes.
3. The Government and other financial agencies should be more Liberal in granting loans to the farmers and allowing them sufficient time before paying back the loans.
4. The Government through Ministry of Agriculture should supply agricultural inputs such as fertilizers at appropriate time and at a subsidized price to encourage greater percentage of use.
5. The Ministry of Agriculture and information should organized public lectures, seminars, symposium, exhibition, conferences and campaign on the effective techniques of modern farming methods. These forums should be extended to our villages where farmers are living.

Table 1: Age Distribution of Farmers

Age	No. of Farmers	Percentage
Below 30 years	10	10
31 - 40 "	13	13
41 - 50 "	29	29
51 - 60 "	26	26
Over 60 "	22	22
Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2008

Table 2: Gender Ratio of the Farmers

Age	No. of Farmers	Percentage
Male	36	36
Female	64	64
Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2008**Table 3: Types of Farming**

Types	No. of Farmers	Percentage
Subsistence	90	90
Commercial	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2008**Table 4: Formal Educational Background of the Farmers**

Response	No. of Farmers	Percentage
A. No formal education	46	46
B. Primary school	28	28
C. Secondary school	17	17
D. Tertiary institution	9	9
Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2008**Table 5: Does Agricultural Extension services led to increase or decrease in food production.**

Item	SA	A	D	SD
1.The knowledge of Agricultural Extension is an aid to farmers.	41 (41%)	(23%)	23 (26%)	26 (10%)
2.There is availability of useful information from Agricultural Extension workers.	34(34%)	31(31%)	23(23%)	12(12%)
3.Information from Agricultural extension agents leads to improvement in food production	52 (52%)	23(23%)	14(14%)	11(11%)
Total divided by three	127%	77%	63%	33%
Ground Total (%)	42.3%	25.7%	21%	11%

Source: Fieldwork, 2008

Table 6: To test whether Agricultural Extension service has reduced the conservation and the attitude of farmers in food production.

Item	SA	A	D	SD
1.The use of fertilizer is not good for many crops.	10 (10%)	15 (15%)	30 (30%)	40 (40%)
2.The use of modern implements such as tractors in farming activities do not increase production.	-	-	20 (20%)	80 (80%)
3.Farming is a job only for illiterates	5(5%)	2(2%)	32(32%)	61(61%)
4.Crops are not better cared for than the way our ancestors practice it in those days	9 (9%)	5 (5%)	52 (52%)	34 (34%)
Total divided by four	24%	22%	134%	215%
Grand Total	6.0%	6.0%	33.5%	53.8%

Source: Fieldwork, 2008

Table 7: To test whether educated farmers are more successful in boosting Agricultural production than the illiterate ones.

Item	SA	A	D	SD
1.Ones level of formal education helps him/her to understanding better farming method	19 (19%)	32 (32%)	30 (32%)	19 (19%)
2.Acquisition of formal education Hastens the acceptance of Agricultural Extension service	25 (25%)	35 (35%)	23 (23%)	17 (17%)
Total divided by two	44%	67%	53%	36%
Grand total	22%	33.3%	26%	18%

Source: Fieldwork, 2008

Table 8: To test whether it is true that farmers near Agricultural institutes performs better as regards to Agricultural.

Item	SA	A	D	SD
1.Living close to any Agricultural establishment or contact with agric. personal leads to increase in Agric. Products.	21 (21%)	47 (47%)	20 (20%)	12 (12%)
2.Farmer who enjoy the service of extension service (workers) are more progressive than others.	38 (38%)	52 (52%)	7 (7%)	3 (3%)
Total divided by two	59%	99%	27%	15%
Grand total	29.5%	49.5%	13.5%	7.5%

Source: Fieldwork, 2008

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