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Poultry Farmers' Utilization of Information in Lagelu Local Government Area, Oyo State of Nigeria

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Abstract: This study investigated poultry farmers' access and utilization of extension information in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State. Data were collected using structured questionnaire. The results indicate that poultry farmers obtain information from a variety of sources with television been the most prominent (68%). Animal health it was found is the top information need of poultry farmers (52%). Severe constraints to poultry production are cost of obtaining information (64%), veterinary services (66%) and non-availability of extension agents (63%). The study further shows that poultry farmers' sex and educational level are significantly related to sources of information. Similarly, poultry farmers' sex and educational level are related to their utilization of information. Non availability of extension agents, cost of inputs are also significantly related to farmers' utilization of information. The results imply that paucity of extension workers and increased cost of inputs reduce the probability of farmers utilizing available technologies or information.

Key words: Poultry farmer, research information, animal production

Introduction

A major task in agricultural development is the transfer of improved technologies to farmers. Although extension institutions and various sources of information exist in almost every developing country, the coverage of farm families is still very limited. A link between farm families and research information is very important. Trends in Nigeria's agricultural development scenario show that mass media have tremendous potentials for agricultural information dissemination (Yahaya, 2002). Specifically, Sonaiya (2004), indicated that extensive contacts in information sharing such as can be found in a network is required for development of animal production. This is because it will improve the performance of locally available animal production resources within the rural system.

The utilization of available information by farmers has also received attention in literature because it justifies among other factors, efforts by research and related organizations to improve farmers' activities and output. Several studies have shown the potency of information dissemination approaches such as face-to-face, mass media, and posters to reach farmers of varying personalities because they are easily accessible to them. However, it is doubtful, if these farmers effectively utilize any information received, as performance in the agricultural sector is still low.

According to literature, only about 5% of Nigerian dailies' news is agricultural, and this may not sufficiently complement the dissemination of information from other sources (Olowu, 1990). Low performance of agricultural centers has also been traced to the concentration of information centers in urban areas, non-integration of extension and research, non-usage of local language by

print media and shortage of extension agents (Canagarajah *et al.*, 2000) lack of agricultural inputs (Ojo and Plamers, 1998); and low educational level of farmers (Yahaya, 2003).

However, prospects for sustainable poultry production in Nigeria are high given locally available resources. One way to increase poultry production in Nigeria is through proper information dissemination, management and utilization. Sonaiya (1999) noted that development, documentation and dissemination of information and appropriate methods of data collection, collation, storage, retrieval and application on the field are essential. He reiterated that the poultry division of a unified extension system can use information gathered to promote rural poultry. Hill (1992) has described. The current free flow of information between and among countries, often referred to the information age (Hill, 1992), has enhanced information accessibility which has improved communication and advancement in technology. The poultry industry in Nigeria can take advantage of this development. However, for this advantage to be adequately exploited there is a need to determine the extent to which poultry farmers' access and utilize information. Filling this gap will provide a basis for designing and effecting a strategic information dissemination approach specific to the needs of poultry farmers. It is therefore in this regard that Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State was chosen for this investigation.

Materials and Methods

The population for this study is poultry farmers in Lagelu LGA of Oyo state Nigeria. This LGA was selected because of the high concentration of poultry farmers who

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Table 1: Information Sources and Use

Channel	Source	Non-Usage	Use weekly	Monthly	Quarterly
Extension agent	22%	63%	6%	23%	10%
NGO	27%	-	48%	21%	31%
Farm magazine	32%	-	14%	20%	66%
Television	68%	-	85%	26%	8%
Veterinary personnel	52%	-	16%	44%	43%
Handbills	47%	-	12%	40%	48%
Radio	43%	-	18%	25%	58%

produce and market poultry and poultry products in that area of Oyo State. Essentially then, poultry constitutes a significant component of the LGA's income generating activity. Three hundred and eighty poultry farmers were identified in the LGA. From this sample frame 120 poultry farmers were randomly selected.

Structured questionnaires were developed and administered on the selected farmers. The questionnaires elicited responses pertaining to poultry farmers' demographic characteristics, information needs as well as their sources, access and utilization of information. Relationship between farmers' demographic characteristics and their information-related variables (sources, access, utilization and constraints) were tested using chi-square statistics.

Farmers' demographic characteristics included age, educational level, sex, farm size, and participation in socio-economic associations. Information sources and usage were operationalized as points where information emanated and frequency of application of accessed information to farming activities. To measure constraints, respondents were asked to react to eight statements using a three-point scale, on constraints experienced in accessing information. Farm size was measured as number of birds owned.

Results and Discussion

The data on farmers' demographics indicated that most of the poultry farmers are between 36 years and 55 years with a mean of 36.7 years. Eighty nine percent of the farmers are male, 40% had secondary education while 15-30% had some form of post secondary education.

The average poultry size is 1,675 birds. This is an indication that most of the poultry farmers are medium scale producers. Approximately 47% own between 1000-4000 birds, 43% own below 1000 birds and 11% own above 5,000 birds. Participation in socio-economic groups is low. Specifically, 27% are members of farmers' groups while 73% are not. This may be attributed to high membership fees of these associations in the LGA. Data indicate that poultry farmers' information sources are television (68%), veterinary personnel (52%), handbill (47%) radio (43%), farm magazine (32%), non governmental organizations (32%) and extension agents (26%).

Respondents indicated varying use of information from these sources. They use poultry information from television (68%) and NGOs (27%). A majority of poultry farmers (63%), however, do not use information from extension agents (Table 1).

Data also indicate that animal health is a high information need area of poultry farmers (52%). Information related to other production requirements are of low need. As regards constraints to accessing poultry production information, the farmers feel that the cost of obtaining information (64%), veterinary services (66%) and non-availability of extension agents (63%) are severe constraints while they regard inappropriate time of broadcasting agricultural programmes (39%), erratic electricity supply (32%) and scarcity of day-old chicks (43%) as less severe constraints (Table 2).

Significant relationships were established between poultry farmers' sex, educational level and their sources of information (Chi-square = 0.13, $p < 0.05$ and Chi-square = 8.01, $p < 0.05$ respectively). Yahaya (2001) had reported significant relationship between women's profile and contact with extension agents.

Relationships were also established between poultry farmers' sex, educational level and information utilization (Chi-square = 3.64, $p < 0.05$ and Chi-square = 8.01, $p < 0.05$ respectively). Yahaya (2001) and Rumawi (2002) reported similar results in previous studies that sourcing of agricultural information and utilization is along gender lines. They had posited that women are less likely to participate because they have limited time to access or utilize available information due to pressure of household responsibilities.

This study also found significant relationships between non-availability of extension agents, cost of inputs and poultry farmers' information utilization (Chi-square = 12.5, $p < 0.05$ and Chi-square = 3.48, $p < 0.05$) respectively. The results imply that scarcity of extension workers and increase of input cost reduce the chance of farmers buying or utilizing available technologies or information.

This study acquired both descriptive and inferential information about poultry farmers and their access and utilization of information. Data collected show that the respondents were highly literate and in their reproductive age range. Large scale production was scanty. Membership of association was rather low and

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Table 2: Reaction to Information constraints Statements

Statements	Most severe	Severe	Not severe	N
Veterinary services cost	66%		10%	171
Information cost	64%	37%	9%	115
Non-availability of extension agent	63%	33%	4%	120
High cost of input	53%	50%	8%	120
Concealment of information by big poultry farmers	47%	44%	17%	120
Scarcity of Day-old-Chicks	24%		43%	120
Erratic electricity supply	18%		32%	120
Inappropriate airing time of agricultural programme	17%		39%	120

attributed to high membership fees. Poor financial base was linked to inability to adopt new technologies and access relevant information.

The data collected on access to information sources indicated concern about absence of extension personnel, scanty animal health services provided by private veterinary personnel, and limited access to production information. They also held a common view that the concerns expressed constituted severe constraints to their production activities. Use of information from radio, television programmes and private veterinary personnel were on monthly or quarterly basis. This is not adequate to increase poultry production.

Reaction towards access of relevant information indicted that the respondents agreed that absence of extension workers, scanty contact with private veterinary personnel and cost of obtaining information were severe constraints. However, inappropriate time of airing agricultural programmes, erratic electricity supply and scarcity of day-old-chicks are less severe constraints. These results indicate that information is crucial to production activities.

Chi-square analysis indicated significant relationships between sex, educational level and information sources. Significant relationship was also found between sex, educational level and information utilization. Similarly a significant relationship was found between non-availability of extension workers, cost of input and information utilization. Poultry farmers can be better reached by increasing presence of extension workers and strengthening communication method.

To increase poultry production in the study area, the extension delivery system particularly the communication and input delivery components must be strengthened. This will enable extension and related organizations to be in continual contact with the poultry farmers and together they can fashion out appropriate communication patterns, upgrade knowledge, attitudes and practices. Poultry farmers present one of the major groups that extension has and will continue to target.

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