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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECT OF EXTENSION SERVICES ON ARABLE FARMERS' PRODUCTION IN EKITI SOUTH WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EKITI STATE.

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Abstract

The study investigated the effect of extension services on arable crop farmers' production in Ekiti South West Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Multistage sampling technique was used to select 105 respondents from the list obtained from the state ADP. Interview schedule was employed to elicit information from the respondents. Data obtained were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistics. More than half (55.2%) of the respondents were aged 50 years and above and 57.1% had no formal education. Majority (83.8%) were married, had a farm size range of 1-2 hectares (80.9%) and had farming experience of not less than 16 years (72.4%). A large percentage of respondents (68.6%) sourced for improved agricultural practices through fellow farmers and 50.5% financed their arable farming business through cooperative societies' loans. Crops grown by the farmers include; maize, yam, cassava, okra, vegetable and sweet potato. More than half (52.4%) of the respondents had favourable attitude towards extension services while farmers' production was low among many of them (48.6%). Significant relationship exist between age ($r = 0.305$), farm size ($r = 0.381$), years of formal education ($r = 0.488$), farming experience ($r = 0.643$), attitude of farmers towards extension services and their production ($r = 0.196; p < 0.05$). Farmers had poor but effective extension services on their production. Therefore, arable crop farmers need a dynamic extension service through purposeful contact with extension agents, government should increase the funding, mobility and motivation of field extension staff to ensure better agricultural production and invariably, achieve food security in the country.

Key words: Arable crop farmers, access to extension services

Introduction

Agriculture is a major driver of Nigeria's economy. It is the largest contributor to the well-being of the rural poor in Nigeria, sustaining 90% and 70% of the rural and total labour force, respectively (Akpabio, 2005). It allows for the provision of excess food, agricultural raw materials, survival and sustenance of cottage industries for the teeming population, through agricultural extension services in areas of innovative information on better agricultural practices, agricultural credit facilities and facilities for

timely agricultural input delivery to farmers. Its contributions to GDP in the years 2004 and 2005 were 40.58% and 41.67% (CBN, 2006). Agricultural holdings are generally small and scattered. Also, farming is often of the subsistence variety, characterized by simple tools and shifting cultivation. These small farms produce about 80% of the total food (FAO, 2006). The sustainable increase in agricultural productivity, technology and managerial innovation continue to be the significant ways to ensure sustainability and nurture economic growth in the country.



Over the years, successive governments in Nigeria had put on board a number of programmes aimed at transforming agricultural and rural development. These programmes include the Farm Settlement Scheme (FSS) 1959, National Accelerated Food Production Project (NAFPP) 1973, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) 1975, Green Revolution Project (GRP) 1980, Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) 1975, Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) 1986, National Directorate of Employment (NDE) 1986 among others. These programmes were launched mainly towards unlocking the agricultural and rural development potentials of Nigeria; many of them have gone moribund and the existing ones are yet to achieve the desired objectives. However, the responsibility of transferring agricultural information and innovations to farmers is discharged nationwide, mainly by the Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) as a public extension services provider and supported by private sector extension services. The failure of various extension delivery approaches in Nigeria to effectively contrive significant and sustainable agricultural growth has become a serious concern to all stakeholders. The withdrawal of World Bank as the major donor to extension services provision in 1995 put a stop to her contribution of counterpart funding, generating higher constraints to agricultural development in the nation. The concerns have been fueled lately by the ripple movement for sustainability of farmers in the perfect market and climate change sweeping across the world, giving rise to initiatives that will enhance efficiency and effectiveness of technology generation, dissemination and use to the farmers. The burgeoning population, environmental degradation, political instability, economic failure and declining budget have triggered the re-thinking the way agricultural technology is delivered to farmers as access to extension services has become necessary. Nigerian farmers have poor access to extension

services because the impact of Agricultural Development Programmes is unsatisfactory and retrogressing as agricultural production and food security recorded are threatening and worrisome from all available evidences such as high cost of food items, importation of food items recorded in large rate and unresponsiveness to farmers needs. These poor and low quality extension services are widely publicized and spread to farmers for acquaintance as access to extension services. Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) one and seven will become a mirage if the Agricultural Development Programme, as the implementation organ of the government on agricultural and rural development, is not revamped from its present state of weakness and underperformance. This study was an attempt to assess the effect of extension services on arable farmers' production in the study area. Therefore, this study was designed to provide answers to the following research questions:

- i. What are the personal characteristics of the farmers in Ekiti South West Local Government Area?
- ii. What are the major arable crops grown by the farmers?
- iii. What are the farmers' sources of information on improved arable cropping practices?
- iv. Do the farmers have access to extension services in Ekiti South West Local Government Area?
- v. What is the attitude of the farmers towards extension services?
- vi. What is the level of production of the arable crop farmers after reception of extension services in Ekiti South West Local Government Area?

Methodology

This study was carried out in Ekiti South West Local Government Area (LGA) of Ekiti State. The local government headquarter is Ilawe Ekiti. It is located in the south western part of Nigeria. It shares boundaries with Ado-Ekiti LGA, Irepodun/Ifelodun LGA, Ekiti West LGA



and Oriade LGA in Osun state. The LGA comprises of three major towns, namely: Ilawe, Ogotun and Igbara-Odo. These towns comprise thirty-three villages and farming is the major occupation of the people. The population of the study is made of arable crop farmers in Ekiti South West Local Government of Ekiti State.

Multi stage sampling technique was used to select respondents used for the study. In the first stage, the three major towns (Ilawe, Ogotun and Igbara Odo) were purposively selected because of the predominant arable crop farming in the towns. In the second stage, fifty percent of the 220 registered farmers obtained from Agricultural Development Zonal Office in the state were randomly selected to give a sample size of 110. Ilawe, Ogotun and Igbara Odo towns comprise 12, 10 and 11 villages respectively, thirty percent (4, 3 and 3) of the villages in each town was randomly selected to give a total of 10 villages across the sampled towns. Eleven (11) respondents were selected through random sampling technique from each of the sampled villages to give a sample size of 110. However, only one hundred and five (105) interview schedules were analyzable having a response rate of 95.5%. Frequency counts, percentages and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used to analyse the data collected and hypotheses of the study. Hypotheses were stated in null form (H_0):

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between selected personal characteristics of the farmers and their production after reception of extension services.

H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between the attitude of the farmers to extension services and their production after reception of extension services.

The hypotheses were rejected if the p -value was $\leq \alpha = 0.05$.

Results and Discussion

Personal characteristics

The distribution of respondents according to their personal characteristics reveals that 55.2% of the respondents fell within the age of 50 years and above. The mean age of the respondents is 52.1 which indicates that they are ageing. This implies that the youth have deserted rural areas where the bulk of farming activities take place, probably to cities in search of white collar job or more lucrative jobs. This conforms with the assertion made by Mayoung *et al* (2002) that most of the farmers in Nigeria are old while young people prefer fast means of generating money like motor cycle riding and bus conductors in the towns and cities. A larger proportion of the respondents (57.1%) were illiterates. A low level of education is inimical to adoption of improved farming practices. Majority (82.9%) of the respondents were male, suggesting that farming in this area is dominated by males, as was also found by Solomon (2008) that in this part of the country, females are usually engaged in post-harvest operations such as transportation, processing and marketing of agricultural produce. Also, high percentage (80.9%) of the respondents have a farm size of 1-2 hectares, indicating that they were small farm holders with low production. This result agrees with Akinbile (2007) that majority of rice farmers have a farm size of 0.5 hectares to 2 hectares. Greater percentage (82.9%) of the respondents had farming experience of 16 years and above. Many years of farming experience might have exposed them to the intricacies of farming and could likely influence their decisions to adopt improved farm practices through extension services. More than half (50.5%) of the respondents financed their arable crop production through cooperative associations.



Table 1: Distribution of respondents by personal characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	
			Mean Age
Age			
30 -39	19	18.1	52.1
40 -49	28	26.7	
50 and Above	58	55.2	
Education			
No formal education	60	57.1	
Primary education	29	27.6	
Secondary education	14	13.3	
Post secondary education	2	1.9	
Sex			
Male	87	82.9	
Female	18	17.1	
Farm size (ha)			
1 - 2	85	80.9	
3 - 4	20	19.1	
Farming experience (years)			
5 -10	7	6.7	
11 - 15	11	10.5	
16 and Above	87	82.9	
Sources of Finance			
Personal savings	41	39.0	
Friends and relatives	11	10.5	
Cooperative Society	53	50.5	

Source: Field survey, 2009 *Multiple responses

Major arable crops grown by the farmers

Major crops are referred to as crops grown in a large quantity for commercial purpose by the farmers in the study area. The comprehensive list of crops was developed from the result of pre-survey carried out prior to the study. Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents grow the following arable crops: maize (91.4%), yam (80%), cassava (74%) and rice (58.1%). Less than half of the

respondents grow the following food crops; okra (42.9%), vegetables (30.5%), sweet potato (14.3%). This implies that greater percentage of the respondents were cultivating maize, yam, cassava and rice because these crops were the farmers main source of income and highly revered by the Ekiti people while other crops were being cultivated probably for mere consumption and supplementary food to the major arable crops.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents based on types of arable crops grown

Crop	Frequency	Percentage
Maize	96	91.4
Yam	84	80.0
Cassava	78	74.0
Rice	61	58.1
Okra	45	42.9
Vegetable	32	30.5
Sweet potato	15	14.3

Source: Field survey, 2009 *Multiple responses



Distribution of respondents' sources of information on improved arable crop farming

Table 3 indicates that substantial respondents (68.6%) had access to information on improved arable cropping practices from fellow farmers, more than half (58.1%) and (50.5%) of the respondents, respectively, sourced for information on improved arable crop

farming practices from extension agents and cooperative societies while few (12.4%) of the respondents sourced their information on improved arable crop farming practices from newspapers. This implies that many of the respondents relied on innovators and early adopters among them for information on improved arable cropping practices and few of the respondents perused newspapers for information on improved arable cropping practices.

TABLE 3: Distribution of arable crop farmers' sources of information on improved practices

Source of Information	of	Yes Frequency	Yes (%)	Frequency of Accessibility (%)	
				Always	Occasionally
Radio		50	47.6	23 (21.9)	27 (25.7)
Fellow farmers		72	68.6	51 (48.6)	21 (20.0)
Extension agents		61	58.1	0(0)	61 (58.1)
Television		38	36.2	3 (2.9)	35 (33.3)
Farmers Cooperative Society		53	50.5	27 (25.7)	53 (24.8)
Newspaper		13	12.4	1(0.7)	12 (11.4)

Source: Field survey, 2009 *Multiple responses

Accessible agricultural extension services to the respondents

From the table 4 below, the finding shows that 72.4% of the respondents accessed training and demonstration on various improved farm practices sometimes, while 65.7% of the respondents sometimes had access to improved seeds. High respondents (68.6%) were linked to credit sources, agro-chemicals sources (61.9%) and large percent

(76.2%) had link to market location of products by extension agents sometimes. Training on processing of products to meet good sale standard sometimes (66.7%) while few (28.6%) sometimes had access to disease resistant crops. This implies that the respondents had little access to extension services. This could dampen the morale of farmers in adopting innovations, fragmentation of farmers and loss of faith in extension services.

Table 4: Distribution of accessible extension services

Accessible extension services	All the time	Sometimes	Never
Training and demonstration	15 (14.3)	74 (72.4)	14 (13.3)
Help source for improved seed	28 (26.7)	69 (65.7)	8 (7.6)
Link with credit sources	11 (10.5)	72 (68.6)	22 (20.9)
Link with for agro-chemicals	26 (24.8)	65 (61.9)	14 (13.3)
Link with market location of products	15 (14.3)	80 (76.2)	10 (9.5)
Training on processing of products to meet good sale standard	17 (16.2)	70 (66.7)	18 (17.1)
Disease resistant varieties of crops	4 (3.8)	30 (28.6)	71 (61.6)
Soil fertility reclamation	26 (24.8)	35 (33.3)	44 (41.9)
Fertilizer subsidy	19 (18.1)	22 (20.9)	64 (60.9)
Processing facility installation	15 (14.3)	26 (24.8)	64 (60.9)

Source: Field survey, 2009 *Multiple responses

Distribution of Respondents' level of access to extension services

Based on the scores obtained by each respondent on access to extension services, respondents were categorized into having high or low level of access to extension service. The highest score for access to extension services was 19 and the lowest score was 6, while the mean score was 11.7. However, categorization was made on the basis of respondents with scores below 11.7 as having low level of access, while respondents that had scores equal or greater than 11.7 had high level of access. The result shows that more than half (53.3%) of the respondents had high level of access to extension services while barely half (46.7%) of the respondents had low level of access to extension services. This depicts that not too many of the arable crop farmers in the study area had access to extension services. This suggests that the crop farmers had only fair reception of extension services and thus, there is need for increase in extension contact to farmers in terms of frequency and quality of service.

Attitude of Respondents towards Extension Services

Attitude was defined in this research as the disposition of the respondents to the extension services received on arable farming activities. Attitude towards extension services received among the respondents was assessed by asking the respondents in their local language to indicate their opinion on 25 positive and negative statements. Their responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale of SA (Strongly Agreed), A (Agreed), U (Undecided), D (Disagreed), SD (Strongly Disagreed), which were 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively, for positive statements, and 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively, for negative statements. Individual scores were obtained and categorized. The highest score was 116, lowest was 17, and mean score was 51. Respondents with scores less than 51 were

categorised as having unfavourable attitude on the extension services received, while those who scored 51 and above were categorised as farmers who have a favourable attitude on the extension services received. The result shows that more than half (52.4%) of the respondents had favourable attitude towards extension services received (score of 51-116), while 47.6% had unfavourable attitude towards extension services received (score of 17-50). This implies that the respondents had a good knowledge and disposition to extension services. The experience of incremental produce and income though, with irregular extension services is likely to predispose them more to increased adoption of improved arable crop farming practices. Adekunle (2008) validated this finding that extension services add value to agricultural practice in that, it enhances farmers' knowledge on innovations, promote positive attitude to new ideas and increases farmers' skills in the use of crop and livestock packages.

Production level of arable crop farmers with contact extension services

Table 5 shows the production of crop farmers after contact with extension services. This is the view of arable crop farmers on account of the benefits of extension services to them. A high percentage (64.8%) of the respondents recorded high production after contact with extension services, with an indication of increase in productivity and sustenance of business profitability. This finding highlighted that the respondents have derived an appreciable benefit from the extension services received in the study area. This implies that extension services have assisted many of the arable crop farmers in their farming enterprises. Adekunle (2007) supported this finding that extension service is a science of maintaining purposeful contact with the farmers with a view to produce positive changes in their enterprises, homes and villages.



Table 5: Distribution of respondents by production from contact with extension services

Production of arable crop farmers from contact with extension services	High Frequency (%)	Moderate Frequency (%)	Low Frequency (%)	Mean
Increased production	16 (15.2)	38 (36.2)	51 (48.6)	1.67
Efficient use of land, labour and capital for higher productivity	50 (47.6)	27 (25.7)	28 (26.7)	2.21
Increased quality of produce	51 (48.6)	22 (20.9)	32 (30.5)	2.81
Reception of information on marketing situations	22 (20.9)	43 (40.9)	40 (38.1)	1.83
Increase in productivity and sustenance of business profitability	68 (64.8)	16 (15.2)	21 (20)	2.45
Access to improved varieties of crops	43 (40.9)	36 (34.3)	26 (24.8)	2.16
Regular keeping of farm and financial record	30 (28.6)	47 (44.8)	28 (26.7)	2.59
Increase in soil fertility maintenance conservation	30 (28.6)	20 (19)	55 (52.4)	2.13
Better pest, disease and weed control practices	32 (30.5)	31 (29.5)	42 (40)	1.90
Increased earnings from produce	33 (31.4)	19 (18.1)	53 (50.5)	2.43
Better post harvest handling	19 (18.1)	40 (38.1)	46 (43.8)	1.74
Better storage mechanism	38 (36.2)	37 (35.2)	30 (28.6)	2.08
Better access to subsidized agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides	40 (38.1)	46 (43.8)	19 (18.1)	2.20
Exploring alternative production technologies	11 (10.5)	70 (66.6)	24 (22.9)	1.88
Improved species of crops allow crop management through growth regulators for defoliation control of flowering crops	30 (28.6)	39 (37.1)	36 (34.3)	2.51
Good combination of indigenous knowledge and improved practices in crop production	34 (32.4)	32 (30.5)	39 (37.1)	2.26
Better identification and solutions to my cropping problems	43 (40.9)	30 (28.6)	32 (30.5)	2.10
Increase in my information seeking behavior through extension services and use of ICTs	37 (35.2)	34 (32.4)	34 (32.4)	2.73
Increased farm size and better management	33 (31.4)	37 (35.2)	35 (33.3)	1.98
Reduction of crop losses and spoilages	35 (33.3)	32 (30.5)	38 (36.2)	1.97

Source: Field survey, 2009 * Figures in parenthesis are in percentages

Respondents production from contact with extension services

Production was defined in this research as the output and benefits derived by the respondents from their contact with extension services. Production of arable crop farmers from contact with extension services was assessed by asking the respondents in their local language to indicate their opinion on 20 performance test statements (Table 5). Their responses were recorded on a three-point scale of high, moderate, low which were scored as 3, 2 and 1. Individual scores were obtained and categorised. The highest score was 59, lowest was 9, and mean score was 13. Respondents with scores less than 13 were categorised as having low production from contact with extension services, while those who scored 13 and above were categorised as farmers who had a high production from

contact with extension services. The result shows that smaller percentage (35.2%) of the respondents had high production from their contact with extension services, while 64.8% had a low production from their contact with extension services. The implication is that farmers enjoyed little benefits of extension services and these informed the low level of production among respondents. It could also damp their reliance on extension services as avenue to seek information on improved practices, since they have only enjoyed little benefits of access and production from contact with extension services.

Test of hypotheses

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis on Table 6 tested relationship between selected personal characteristics of arable crop farmers and their production



after contact with extension services. Results showed that age ($r = 0.305, p < 0.05$), educational level ($r = 0.488, p < 0.05$), farm size ($r = 0.381, p < 0.05$) and farming experience ($r = 0.643, p < 0.05$), respectively, had significant relationship with production of crop farmers after contact with extension services. The relationship between attitude of the respondents to extension services $r = 0.196$ and production

of arable crop farmers after contact with extension services was also significant at $p < 0.05$. The implication of these is that, as the farmers advance in age, educational level, farming experience and increase their farm size, the higher their production in their various arable farming enterprises. The more farmers exhibited favourable attitude towards extension services, the higher their production.

TABLE 5: Pearson product moment correlation result showing correlation between age, educational level, farm size, farming experience, attitude towards extension services and the production of arable crop farmers after contact with extension services

Variable	r- value	p- value	Decision on significance
Age	0.305	0.049*	Significant
Years of formal education	0.488	0.000*	Significant
Farm size	0.381	0.002*	Significant
Farming experience	0.643	0.035*	Significant
Attitude to extension services	0.196	0.045*	Significant

*Correlation is significant at 0.05

Conclusion

It can be concluded from this study that most of the arable crop farmers are old, have low level of education and have long years of experience in arable crop production. Also, most of the respondents cultivate small farm holdings, cooperative society is their major source of finance and majority of them source for improved agricultural production through fellow farmers. They enjoy low reception of extension services and production in arable crop farming, have favourable attitude towards extension services and are willing to adopt innovations provided they could have regular contact and interaction with extension agents.

Recommendations

1. Institutional facilitation of extension services such as efficient input delivery and adequate personnel to client ratio should be focused upon through, recruitment of more extension officers to ADPs in order to

improve the impact of extension services to arable crop farmers.

2. Extension agents should organize more group extension methods of field trips, film shows and result demonstration to further persuade the farmers to adopt innovations promptly.
3. Extension funding should be a tripartite arrangement between Federal, State and Local government and should not be tied to internal grants and loans.
4. Private-sector demand-driven extension services should be patronized by farmers to complement the public extension agency in order to increase the effectiveness and accessibility of extension services to farmers.
5. Government should increase the funding, mobility and motivation of field extension staff to ensure better agricultural production and invariably, achieve food security in the country.



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