UTILIZATION OF MODERN MEDIA FACILITIES BY ADULT FARMERS IN KOGI EAST SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF KOGI STATE

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ABSTRACT
The study investigated the extent of utilization of modern media facilities by Adult farmers in an Information and Communication Technology Era. Five research questions were formulated to guide the study. A survey research design was employed for the study. 900 farmers were sampled for the study. A structured questionnaire was designed and used for collecting the data for the study. The collected data were analyzed using simple percentages. From the analysis of the data, farmers were found to be exposed to the use of radio in collecting vital information about agriculture. It was also discovered that most farmers did not have access to the use of mass media facilities. Based on the findings, useful suggestions were proffered among which is that the local, state and federal governments should join hands in improving the extension services arm of the Ministry of Agriculture through the provision of essential facilities including that of mass media for farmer education.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Most farmers in Kogi State and especially in Kogi East Senatorial District of the State are illiterates, peasant and not fully exposed to new innovations and technologies about agriculture. This lapse has incapacitated the farmers from experiencing improved agricultural productivity. It has been observed by Anup (2008) that with improved Medicare, there has been a corresponding increase in birth rate which has led to increase in population. With the rapid increase in population growth, it is expected that there must be enough food to meet the increasing hungry mouths (Anup, 2008). Surprisingly, the author noted that the reverse is the case, emphasizing that even the food that is produced by the peasant farmers is usually at the subsistence level resulting in food shortages to meet the food demand of the people.

The government in an attempt to meet the food demand of the populace has greatly emphasized on the need for the farmers to engage in commercial agriculture. In effect, the Kogi State government has directed the extension staff of the state's Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) to create awareness among farmers by exposing them to new innovations and technologies in agriculture. Exposure of peasant farmers to new innovations and technologies cannot be made possible without viable and reliable media facilities (Adah and Ameh, 2006). What then are media facilities? Media facilities are tools, equipment and medium through which communication process are made possible within a given geographical zone (Ibitoye, 2007). For the information to reach the farmers in a geographical zone, the farmers should form groups or are helped by extension agents to form cooperation where information can be given to them. Such farmers as adult learners can benefit much from such gathering of like minds or association. According to Black (1994) an adult farmer learners are adult farmers who attend Agricultural Education Programmes provided by extension officers or other providers. The adult farmers learn the latest technology relevant materials, which are made possible through the accessibility of Agricultural Education Programmes. Farmers in the study area can only be equipped with recent research findings/or technologies through effective communication system. Some of the new innovations and technologies that can be communicated to farmers using media facilities for improved agricultural productivity including use of biodegradable resources as organic fertilizers, chemical sprays to crops, methods of planting,

chemical fertilizer application, production of new breeds of animals, improved seeds, improved methods of cultivation, maintenance and conservation of soil and maintenance, harvesting and storage of crops among others. The channel of communication of these technologies and innovations to farmers can be done through effective extension and mass media process.

Generally in Nigeria, the major media facilities in use include radio, television and newspapers. In Kogi State, there exist the Radio broadcasting station, Graphic Newspaper and other private and state initiated magazines for the purpose of information dissemination to both illiterate and literate citizens. The extent of utilization of the above media facilities for the education of the farmers in the state is yet to be exploited for effective agricultural production.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The potential of these media facilities for the education of peasant farmers in the state is yet to be exploited for reasons ranging from high cost of transmission to absence of a proper framework within which to integrate the media into the agricultural development programme. In Kogi State, the media systems from observation are highly centralized and clustered in the urban centers thus preventing much of the needed information from reaching rural communities, where more of the populations live and practice actual farming. Most of the peasant farmers in the state in general and Kogi East Senatorial District in particular are illiterates. The peasant farmers cannot read, write and understand the information at their disposal. The high cost of newspapers, magazines, radio and television limit peasant farmer's usage. The programmes usually produced by editors and programme directors are of high commercial value, which cannot suit the peasant farmers because of their poor capital stamina. From the foregoing, one can observe that the peasant farmers may depend on low source avenue to acquire some useful information about agriculture. The extent of the farmer's dependence on media facilities for getting information regarding agriculture and how to improve agricultural development has not been properly articulated and investigated.

Based on the above background, the researcher examined the extent of utilization of media facilities by farmers as adult learners in an information and communication technology era for improvement of agricultural output.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to examine the extent of utilization of media facilities by Adult farmers in an information and communication technology era in Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the available modern media facilities for the communication of agricultural information to farmers.
2. Determine the extent to which the available modern media facilities for communication of agricultural information are utilized by farmers.
3. Determine the type of agricultural information that is communicated to farmers via the mass media.
4. Examine the media facilities that are preferred by farmers.
5. Determine which of the media facilities has greater influence on farmer's level of agricultural production.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the purpose of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the media facilities that help farmers acquire information about agriculture?
2. What are the level of utilization of the available media facilities by farmers?
3. What are the agricultural information that are disseminated to farmers via the media facilities?
4. Which of the media facilities are preferred by farmers?
5. Which of the media facilities has greater influence on farmer's performance in agricultural production?

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a survey research design. A survey research design according to Eboh (2009) is a field-based activity involving the first-hand collection of data from a captive (sample) audience that is intended to represent a bigger whole using the questionnaire. Survey research design is suitable for this study because group of adult farmers were studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few farmers (captive audience) considered to be representative of the entire group for generalization using the questionnaire. The study consists of all the registered 3,250 rural Adult farmers in Kogi East Agricultural Zone of Kogi State (Kogi State Ministry of Agriculture, 2007). The farmers, who are of different personal characteristics with different farm sizes, are distributed over the 9 local government areas in the study area. 100 registered farmers each were purposively sampled from each Local Government Area. The farmers were those who put up to 75% attendance at co-operative meetings. On the whole 900 farmers were sampled for the study. A structured questionnaire designed by the researcher was used in collecting data for the study. The tool takes care of the research questions. The designed questionnaire was face validated by three experts drawn from the Department of Agricultural Education, Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa and the reliability index was calculated which yielded an index of 0.81. In the collection of the data, two research assistants assisted the researcher. They helped in the distribution of the instrument. All the 900 copies of the instrument administered were completed and returned representing 100% return rate. The data collected were analyzed using percentages. Any item that had a score of 50% and above was regarded as Agreed while items less than 50% are disagreed.

Table 1

Types of Media Facilities that Aid Farmers in the Acquisition of Information about Agriculture (N = 900 Respondents).

S/No	Type of Media Facilities	Responses	Percentage Response	Remarks
1	Radio	701	77.89	Agreed
2	Television	98	10.89	Disagree
3	Newspaper	62	6.89	Disagree
4	Magazines	39	4.33	Disagree
5	Pamphlets	-	-	Disagree
6	GSM Phone	-	-	Disagree
7	Using the Internet	-	-	Disagree
8	Total	900	100	-

Table 1 above shows that information about agriculture was majorly received through radio, which has a percentage rate of 77.89%. About 10.89% received information through television, while agricultural information received by the farmers through newspapers was 6.89%. Also the percentage rate of information received through the magazines by the farmers was only 4.33%. The implication of the above is that the farmers who depend on the above media facilities for information were few and therefore, effort should be made by the extension agents to create awareness among the farmers on how to access information through the facilities identified. Farmers through pamphlets, GSM phone and Internet received no information.

Table 2

The Extent of Utilization of the Available Media Facilities

(N = 900 Responses).

S/No	Type of Media Facilities	High	%	Low	%
1	Radio	763	84.78	137	15.22
2	Television	194	21.56	706	78.44
3	Newspaper	150	16.67	750	83.33
4	Magazines	42	4.67	858	95.33
5	Pamphlets	61	6.78	839	93.22
6	GSM Phone	-	-	-	-
7	Using the Internet	-	-	-	-

From table 2, it has been seen that most of the farmers in the study area utilize radio in the collection of information as it relates to agriculture. The extent of percentage scored under radio media is 84.78, which is high above the cut off point. The percentage utilization of the facilities as shown in the Table include: Television (21.56%), newspaper (16.67%), pamphlets (6.78%) and magazines (4.67%). GSM and Internet uses were not scored at all.

Table 3

Agricultural Information Disseminated to Farmers via the Media Facilities
(N= 900 Responses).

		Responses			
S/No	Agricultural Information	Yes	%	No	%
1	Improved crop variety seedlings	269	32.89	604	67.11
2	Fertilizer application	849	94.33	51	5.67
3	Processing and storage	98	10.89	802	89.11
4	Pest and diseases control	656	72.89	244	27.11
5	Animal breeding	811	90.11	89	9.89
6	Weed control	651	72.33	249	27.67
7	Chemical sprays	753	83.67	147	16.33
8	Use of improved livestock	654	72.67	246	27.33

Table 3 above shows that the agricultural information disseminated to farmers via the media facilities include; fertilizer application (94.33%), pest and disease control (72.89%), weed control (72.33%) and chemical sprays (83.67%). All these had percentages score above the cut-off point of 50%. Other information which include improved crop varieties, processing and storage and improved seedlings were not disseminated to farmers as can be seen in the table above.

Table 4

Media Facilities Preferred by Farmers.

S/No	Media Facilities	Number of Responses	Percentage Response
1	Radio	716	79.56
2	Television	112	12.44
3	Newspaper	29	3.22
4	Magazines	19	2.11
5	Pamphlets	24	2.67
6	GSM	-	-
7	Internet Facilities	-	-
	Total	900	100

The above table revealed that the media facilities preferred by farmers is Radio followed by Television (12.48%), Newspapers (3.22%), Pamphlets (2.67%) and Magazines (2.11%). None of the farmers liked GSM and Internet facilities.

Table 5

Media Facilities that have Greater Influence on Farmers Performance in Agricultural Production (N = 900).

S/No	Names of Media Facilities	Number of Responses	Percentage Response
1	Radio	649	72.11
2	Television	199	22.11
3	Newspaper	28	3.11
4	Magazines	5	0.56
5	Pamphlets	19	2.11
6	GSM	-	-
7	Internet facility	-	-
	Total	900	100

The table above shows that Radio, has the greatest influence on farmer's performance in agricultural production as it was rated high with (72.11%) while television (22.11%), newspaper (3.11%), pamphlets (2.11%), and magazines (0.56%) had little influence. GSM and Internet facilities has no influence on farmer's performance, as they were rated nil.

FINDINGS

From the study, the following findings were made;

1. Farmers majorly received agricultural information via the radio.
2. Television, Newspaper and Pamphlets were used as other sources of receiving agricultural information. None of the farmers liked GSM and internet facilities.
3. Information disseminated majorly to farmers was fertilizer application, pest and disease control, weed control and chemical sprays.
4. Farmers preferred getting agricultural information via the use of radio.
5. Farmer's performances in agricultural production are majorly influenced by the use of Radio.
6. The use of televisions, newspapers, pamphlet, magazines, GSM and Internet has negligible influence on improving farmer's performance rate in agricultural production.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Many media facilities exist but their utilization by farmers varies to a greater extent. Some of these media facilities as identified by Job (2006) include the use of radio, television, newspaper, pamphlets and magazines. Ekele (2007) in support of the above added that the use of posters and agricultural shows/exhibition can also help. The study revealed that radio media was the major media facility used by farmers followed by television, newspapers and pamphlets. This agrees with Job (2006) who gave a list of media facilities as stated above. In contrary, Ibitoye (2007) observed that most peasant farmers are not exposed to the use of these media facilities because of their cost, maintenance and level of education.

Most farmers exposed to the use of these media facilities succeeded in getting information on fertilizer application, pest, diseases and weed control including chemical sprays. This is in line with Adah and Ameh (2006) who stated that to improve agricultural production, farmers should be made to have access to some social amenities, which involve some media materials like radio, television and newspapers. Supporting this further, Daluba (2008) also added that to improve on farmer's performance, they should be fully educated via the use of mass media and with the assistance of the extension agents at various rural areas (locations). The farmers are not aware of the GSM and Internet facilities. This may be as a result of their illiteracy level and high cost. Extension agents should work hard to introduce farmers to these facilities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, it will be advisable for farmers to be assisted with the use of mass media materials and that the instructors (extension agents) should be trained en mass to go round the rural farmers for effective performance in the field.

Based on the conclusion, it is recommended that, the Local, State and Federal Governments should join hands in improving the extension services arm of the Ministry of Agriculture through the provision of essential facilities including that of mass media. The mode of training the rural farmers should be improved by training more extension agents and post them to various rural areas. The extension agents should be regularly and effectively supervised to make sure that justice is done to their work. Mobility facilities should be provided to the extension workers and media facilities be provided to farmers at subsidized rates to enable many farmers purchase them or patronize them.

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