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FARMERS' PERCEPTION OF EXTENSION SERVICES OF THE DELTA STATE
AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (DTADP)

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigated farmers' perception of Extension Services Provided by Delta State Agricultural Development Programme (DTADP) in Delta North Agricultural Zone, Delta State, Nigeria. Data for the study was obtained with the aid of an interview schedule from 90 respondents in the study area. Findings from the study revealed that Delta State Agricultural Development Programme (DTADP) provides extension services to farmers in all the 18 service areas listed in this study. The study also showed that sufficient awareness was created among the farmers in only 7 of the service areas. Farmers were satisfied with the level of services provided by DTADP in only 5 service areas namely: food crops, agro forestry, poultry fisheries and farm credit procurement and utilization. This implied therefore that the farmers were not satisfied with the level of services provided in the remaining 13 service areas. Based on the findings of this study, it recommended that DTADP should evolve strategies to improve the awareness level in those service areas that sufficient awareness is yet to be created. There is also the need to enhance the quality of services rendered so as to raise the confidence and satisfaction of farmers in services provided by DTADP

Key words: Farmers' perception, Extension Services, Delta State Agricultural Development Programme

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural extension is a service or system which assists farm people through educational procedures, improve farming methods and techniques, increase production efficiency and income, better their levels of living and lift the social and educational standards of rural life (Maunder, 1973). The main goal of agricultural extension is the communication of useful information to people and then helping them to learn how to use the information to build a better life for themselves, their families and communities. According to Moris (1991), agricultural extension can be seen as the promotion of any aspect of technology development: how people acquire the necessary resources, how new technologies evolved, what influences their choice, the kind of support a given technology requires, how its adoption can be financed and encouraged, the kind protection it entails"

Agricultural extension services have been provided through various agricultural programmes in Nigeria. The Agricultural Development programme (ADP) is one outstanding programme that has contributed immensely in transforming the Nigerian agriculture. It is perhaps the boldest step ever taken by the government of Nigeria to develop the agricultural sector (Amalu,1998). The main objective of the ADP is to provide Nigerian rural dwellers and farmers with extension services, agricultural support and rural development services. The ADP represents the singular outfit through which proven technologies are disseminated to farmers. The technologies are in the form of production technologies which are adapted to the farmers' native farming system.

In order to achieve its objective, the ADPs have, over the years adopted the following strategies: (a) a recognised and revitalised extension system adequately linked to research system; (b) Conduction of on-farm Adaptive Research (OFAR) as a means of developing and validating new technologies before transfer to the farmers through the extension system;

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(c) Commercialised and improved farm input delivery system which includes seed multiplication through out grower or contact farmer approach; (d) establishment of effective linkage between farmers and credit institutions, (e) Construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of rural feeder roads to enhance all season accessibility of rural farming communities; (f) Provision of portable water and small-scale irrigation facilities for domestic consumption and dry-season farming; (h) Incorporation of internal and external monitoring system during project implementation stage; and (i) an autonomous management unit which allows for timeliness in decision making and project implementation (Ayichi,1995).

The Delta State Agricultural Programme (DTADP) has been providing extension services to farmers through the dissemination of information on low-cost proven agricultural technologies in crops, fisheries, livestock, agro-forestry and fadama development. The performance of extension services in developing countries with respect to the transfer of agricultural technology to farmers has been disappointing. In general, extension services have consistently failed to deal with the site-specific needs and problems of the farmers (Ahmad, 1999). Among reasons often suggested for the poor performance of extension services include, lack of farmers interest, in extension services, low awareness among farmers regarding available extension services and farmers poor economic background of the farmers. It is against this background that this study was conceived to answer the following research questions: (a) What is the farmers level of awareness regarding extension services rendered by DTADPS; and (b) What is the farmers perception of the services rendered by DTADPS. The general objective of the study is to assess farmers awareness and perception concerning agricultural extension services provided by the Delta State Agricultural Development programme. The specific objectives of the study are to;

- (1) determine the personal characteristics of farmers;
- (2) ascertain farmers level of awareness of services rendered by DTADP;
- (3) ascertain farmers perception of services rendered by DTADP.

METHODOLOGY

The Study was limited to the Northern agricultural of Delta State. A multistage sampling procedure was used in selecting respondents for the study. In the first stage 6 Local Government Areas (LGAs) were selected out of 9 LGAs in the zone. In the second stage, three communities were selected from each of the 6 LGAs. This gave a total of 18 communities. In the third stage, 5 farmers were selected from each community, giving a total of 90 farmers used in this study.

Data for the study were collected from the respondents through an interview schedule. Questions contained in the interview schedule were designed to elicit information relating to the objectives of the study. Farmers level of awareness regarding services rendered by DTADP was measured by listing the extension services provided by DTADP and respondents were asked to indicate the services they are aware of from the list. 50% and above awareness level was regarded as high while below 50% was taken as low awareness.

Perception of extension services rendered by DTADP was determined by asking respondents to indicate their level of satisfaction with the services they received along a 4-point Likert-type scale as follows: not satisfied, slightly satisfied, satisfied and very satisfying. Values of 1,2,3 and 4 were assigned to these response options. 2.50 Which is the mean of the response values was used as the cut-off point. Therefore, services with mean value of 2.50 and above implied that the respondents were satisfied with they received while those services with a mean of below 2.50 implies that respondents were not with the hence or

services provided. Chi-square analysis was used to determine relationship between respondents personal characteristics and perception

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that majority (49%) of the respondents were between 40 and 49 years of age, while only 7% them were within the age range of 30 to 34years. Those that were between 25 and 29years accounted for 14% while the remaining 13% of the respondents were between the age range of 50 and 59 years. Also, the table further shows that a mean age of 41 years was found for the respondents. This implies that majority of the farmers are in their middle age and hence are in their productive age. Entries in table 1 indicate that majority of the respondents (70%) are males while the remaining 30% are females. Also, only 4% of the respondents had no any form of forma education while 18% of them had primary education. Those that had secondary education accounted for 36% while those with adult literacy education were 31%. The remaining 7% of the respondents had tertiary education. These findings show that majority of the farmers literate and could therefore attach importance to extension service. Findings further reveals that 40% of the respondents have farming experience ranging from 1 to 5 years while majority of them (47%) have farm experience of between 6 and 10 years only 9% of the respondents have experience ranging from 11 to 16 years while the remaining 4% have farm experience of above 16 years. This shows that the farmers have high experience in farming which is necessary for a applying extension advice.

Entries in table 1 shows 20% of the respondents have f arm size of less than 1ha while majority of them (39%) have farm size of between 1 and 2ha. Those that have farm size between 3 and 4 ha accounted for 36% while the remaining 5% have farm size that are 5 ha and above. Sixteen percent (16%) of the respondents get monthly income of less than N5000 while majority of them (42%) get a monthly income of between N6000 and N10,000. Those that get a monthly income of between N11,000 and N15,000 accounted for 29% of the respondent. Only 13% of them were found to get a monthly income of N16,000 and above.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents According to Personal Characteristics (n = 90)

Personal Characteristics	Frequency	X	Percentage
Age (years)			
25-29	13	41	14
30-34	15		17
35-39	6		7
40-44	18		20
45-49	26		29
50-54	7		8
55-59	5		5
Sex			
Male	67		70
Female	23		30
Highest Educational Level			
No formal education	4		4
Primary school education	16		18
Secondary school education	36		40

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Adult literacy	28	31
Tertiary education	6	7
Farming experience (Years)		
1 – 5	36	40
6 – 10	42	47
11 – 15	8	9
16 – 20	4	4
above 20	0	0
Farm Size (ha)		
Less than 1	18	20
1 – 2	35	39
3 – 4	22	36
5 – 6	3	3
above 6	2	2
Monthly Income (₦)		
Less than 5000	14	16
6000 – 10,000	38	42
11,000 – 15,000	26	29
16,000 – 20,000	8	9
above 20,000	4	4

Source: Field Survey, 2006

Respondents Awareness of Services provided by DTADP.

Entries in table 2 reveal that there is a general awareness among farmers concern intension services provided by the DTADP. Concerning extension services provided by the DT ADP. High awareness level was found for only 7 of the 17 services listed in the study. The seven services are in the area of agro-forestry, food crop, poultry, fishery, marketing and distribution supply of agricultural inputs and farm credit procurement and utilization.

The table further show that among the services which the farmer indicated low awareness are: snailery, small ruminant production, rabbitory, piggery, beekeeping, human nutrition and family planning amongst others. Swanson (1997) noted that the role of extension in technology transfer has gone beyond information delivery in crops and livestock husbandry and management. Extension service now covers other areas such as human health and nutrition, prices and markets for agricultural products, organising farmers' groups, family planning and birth control issues. The low awareness level expressed by farmers in these services could therefore be due to the fact that sufficient awareness has not be created by extension about its changing role services.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents According to their Level of Awareness of Extension Services

Extension Service Areas	Frequency	Percentage (n=90)
1. Cash crop extension service	42	46
2. Large ruminant extension service	36	40
3. Agro-forestry extension service	56	62 *
4. Snailery extension service	29	32

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5. Small ruminant extension service	35	38
6. food crop extension service	72	80 *
7. Poultry extension service	62	68 *
8. Rabbit extension service	44	48
9. Piggery extension service	37	41
10. Beekeeping extension service	36	40
11. Fishery extension service	64	71 *
12. Marketing/Distribution of agric products	43	47
13. Supply of agricultural inputs	64	71 *
14. Prices and markets for agric products	43	47
15. Farm Credit procurement & utilization	53	58 *
16. Processing & storage of agric products	42	46
17. human health and nutrition	38	42
18. family planning and birth control	24	26

Multiple responses * High awareness

Respondents perception of services provided by DTADP

Information in table 3 showed that farmers were satisfied with the quality of services rendered by DTADP in only 5 service areas. These are agro-forestry, fisheries food crop, poultry and farm credit procurement and utilization. Incidentally, these five extension service areas are among those services the farmers indicated that they had sufficient awareness (see table 2). It can therefore be concluded that DTADP has created sufficient awareness and has also rendered quality services to farmers in these traditional areas of extension coverage such as crops, agro forestry, livestock and fishery. The implication of this finding therefore is that DTAP is yet to sufficiently cover the new areas of extension service such as snailery, rabbitory, beekeeping, commodity prices and markets information and human health and family planning

Table 3: Mean Scores of respondent's perception of service provided by DTADP

Extension Services	Mean Score
1. cash crop extension service	1.8
2. Large ruminant extension service	1.2
3. Agro-forestry	2.60
4. snailery extension service	0.9
5. small ruminant extension	1.2
6. Food crop extension service	2.8 *
7. poultry extension service	2.6 *
8. Rabbitory extension service	0.8
9. Piggery extension service	1.4
10. Beekeeping extension service	0.8
11. Fishery extension service	2.7
12. Marketing and distribution of agric products	1.9
13. Supply of agricultural inputs	1.5
14. Prices and markets for agric products	1.7
15. Farm credit procurement and utilisation	2.6 *
16. Processing and storage agric products	1.4
17. human health and nutrition	0.8
18. family planning and birth control	0.5

Table 4: Relationship between respondents personal characteristics and Perception

Variable	X^2_{cal}	X^2_{tab}	level of Significance	Decision
Age	1.75	12.59	5%	NS
Sex	0.94	5.99	5%	NS
Educational Level	5.99	4.17	5%	S
Farming Experience	11.40	5.99	5%	S
Farm Size	24.5	11.07	5%	S
Monthly Income	12.59	3.22	5%	S

S - Significant
NS - Not Significant

The chi-square results in table 4 reveal that there is no significant relationship between age, sex and perception of the farming regarding quality of extension services. There is however a significant relationship between the educational level, farming experience, farm size, monthly income and perception of farmers. This finding is in live with reports of earlier studies which found positive relationship between these variables and farmers access to information on farm improvement technologies and services (Ewuola and Ajibefun, 2000, Ajayi and Okunlola, 2006 and Yomi Alfred, 2000).

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that Delta State agricultural Development programme (DTADP) provides extension services to farmers in all the 18 service areas listed in this study. It was also found that sufficient awareness was created among the farmers in only 7 of the service areas. The study also revealed that the farmers were satisfied with the level of services provided by DTADP in only 5 service areas namely: food crops, agro forestry, poultry fisheries and farm credit procurement and utilization. This implied therefore that the farmers were not satisfied with the level of services provided in the remaining 13 service areas. Based on the findings of this study, it recommended that DTADP should evolve strategies to improve the awareness level in those service areas that sufficient awareness is yet to be created. There is also the need to enhance the quality of services rendered so as to raise the confidence and satisfaction of farmers is services provided by DTADP

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