

RELATIVE DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED BY FARMERS IN OBTAINING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION INPUTS IN ABIA AND AKWA IBOM STATES OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The investing was undertaken to determine the relative difficulties encountered by farmers in securing selected production inputs in Abia and Akwa-Ibom States, Nigeria. Two-hundred and eighty farmers selected through multi-stage sampling procedure comprised the sample. Interviewed schedule that employed a 4-point rating scale was administered to elicit information about relative difficulties experienced by farmers in obtaining required quantities, timely supply and cost of production inputs. The results indicate that farmers had the greatest difficulties in obtaining required quantities of fungicides/herbicides, fertilizer, livestock and fishery inputs. The greatest difficulties were experienced with regards to timely supply of fertilizer, fishery, fungicides/herbicides and livestock inputs in that order of decreasing intensity. Farmers cited fishery inputs as the costliest, followed by fertilizer, fungicides/herbicides and livestock inputs. On the other hand, farmers experienced minimum difficulties with adequate supply, timely supply and cost of agro processing, agro foresting and improved seeds. The paper suggests strategies for alleviating the constraints faced by farmers.

Key words: difficulties, farmers, agricultural production inputs

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, the need for development in rural areas is one of the dominant issues. (Ilevbaoje, 1999). A considerable number of factors are involved in rural development. These factors are complex in themselves as well as their inter-relationships. Jones (1986) and Ilevbaoje (1999) explained that these factors can be analyzed and discussed from many disciplinary and ideological perspectives and at the different theoretical and analytical levels. Among the several factors that interplay to bring about rural development, the significance of agricultural extension has been well documented in literature (Ilevbaoje, 1999, FGN 2004, Unamma, *et al* 2004 and Olatunji, 2005). There appears to be a consensus among several researchers that agricultural extension efforts represents one of the most important ways by which rural people can be assisted to improve their productivity and general living conditions (FGN 2004, Ilevbaoje, 2004 Olatunji, 2005, and Olatunji and Etuk, 2010).

In Nigeria, several agricultural extension approaches have been tried with varying degrees of successes. Among these are: (i) the Conventional Ministry operated extension (ii) Project development approach (iii) Sectorial/Commodity extension (iv) University-based extension (v) Integrated rural development approach (vi) the farmer-focused extension, and a number of programmes with elements of extension, such as the Farm Settlement Scheme. Ekpo and Olaniyi (1995) explained that most of these efforts were adjudged ineffective and inefficient. Eventually, the persistent desire to improve technology transfer and diffusion strategy in Nigeria led to the review of the extension service and consequent adoption of the

Training and Visit (T&V) system of managing agricultural extension which is called Unified Agricultural Extension Service (UAES) in the Nigerian context.

In the UAES, strong linkage between extension and Input Agencies is expected. However, the role of Extension Agents is limited to advising Input Agencies about the input supply situation in the field and anticipated demand as well as informing, advising and teaching farmers about input utilization. According to Benor and Baxter, (1984), agricultural input and agricultural extension is mutually dependent. Extension cannot make significant impact on agricultural production if the inputs required to implement its advice are not available. Khan, *et al* (1984), cited by Ilevbaoje, (1999) observed that even if extension works efficiently and there are no internal obstacles, innovations may not be adopted by farmers if the recommended inputs are not available in the desired quantities, required quality and at proper time and place.

Olatunji (2005) explained that unavailability of input is capable of impeding the effectiveness of extension services. In Nigeria, rural producers cannot rely on the private sector to supply their input needs such as improved seeds, fertilizers, fungicides, herbicides and livestock, fishery, agro-forestry and agro-processing inputs. Private involvement is largely confined to marketing output which is usually unable to meet the demands of large number of farmers. Government support for input services is often required

Several studies carried out in India (e.g. Perinbam 1986, Perumal and Menon (1986) and cited by Ilevbaoje (1999) have shown that unavailability of input at required time and increased costs of input were the most important problems experienced by contact and other farmers. Ilevbaoje (1999) also cited Akinola (1983) who reported that farmers in Funtua experienced minimum difficulty in the timely supply of farmland, tractors and fertilizers while there was minimum difficulty in the timely supply of credit, herbicides/weedicides and sprayers. Ilevbaoje (1999) also reported that farmers in Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau States had the greatest difficulties with timely supply of sprayers, obtaining adequate quantities of sprayers and in the transportation of fertilizers but that farmers experienced minimum difficulty with timely supply, obtaining adequate quantities and transportation of improved seeds.

The objectives of this present investigation are to:

- i) determine the relative difficulties encountered by Abia and Akwa-Ibom States farmers in securing selected farm input.
- ii) find out farmers' ratings of timely supply of production input and
- iii) find out farmers' ratings of the cost of required production input.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The population of study includes all 153,600 and 219,200 farm families in Abia and Akwa-Ibom States of Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed in selecting the respondents, bearing in mind the delineation of the study areas into zones, blocks, cells and sub-circles. Seven zones, 2 blocks per zone, 2 circles per block, 2 sub-circles per circle, 2 Representative contact farmers and 3 other contact farmers were selected through simple random sampling techniques. Thus, a sample of 280 farmers (120 from Abia and 160 from Akwa-Ibom) comprised the sample for the study.

An interview schedule that employed a 4-point rating scales was administered to respondents with a view to eliciting information on relative difficulties experienced by farmers with respect to timely supply, availability of required quantities and cost of needed

production input. The data obtained were subjected to descriptive statistical analyses and the findings are as indicated in tables 1-3.

RESULTS

Table 1: Farmers’ means ratings of the level of difficulty associated with obtaining required quantities of production recommendations

S/ N	Input	Abia ADP		AKADEP		Abia & Akwa-Ibom ADPs	
		Mean Rank		Mean Rank		Mean Rank	
1	Improved seeds	2.2	5	1.16	6	1.68	5
2	Fertilizer	2.26	3	2.81	2	2.53	2
3	Fungicides/herbicides	3.10	2	3.7	1	3.40	1
4	Livestock	2.23	4	2.7	3	2.48	3
5	Fishery	3.80	1	1.12	7	2.46	4
6	Agroforestry	1.12	6	2.0	5	1.56	7
7	Agroprocessing	1.10	7	2.2	4	1.65	6

Table 2: Farmers’ means ratings of the level of difficulty in timely supply of required production input

S/ N	Input	Abia ADP		AKADEP		Abia & Akwa-Ibom ADPs	
		Mean Rank		Mean Rank		Mean Rank	
1	Improved seeds	1.5	5	2.6	4	2.05	6
2	Fertilizer	3.2	2	3.5	1	3.35	1
3	fungicides/herbicides	2.7	3	2.8	3	2.75	3
4	Livestock	2.3	4	2.81	2	2.55	4
5	Fishery	3.8	1	2.4	5	3.10	2
6	Agroforestry	1.2	7	1.3	6	1.25	5
7	agroprocessing	1.3	6	1.1	7	1.2	7

Table 3: Farmers’ ratings of relative difficulty associated with cost of required production input

S/ N	Input	Abia ADP		AKADEP		Abia & Akwa-Ibom ADPs	
		Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Rank	Mean
1	Improved seeds	1.15	6	2.1	5	1.62	6
2	Fertilizer	2.24	3	2.8	1	2.52	2
3	fungicides/herbicides	2.42	2	2.4	2	2.41	3
4	Livestock	2.23	4	2.32	3	2.27	4
5	Fishery	3.3	1	2.30	4	2.65	1
6	Agroforestry	2.1	5	1.4	6	1.75	5
7	agroprocessing	1.10	7	1.0	7	1.05	7

DISCUSSION

Difficulty associated with obtaining adequate quantities of required production input

The data in table 1 indicate that farmers in Abia State are experiencing the greatest difficulty in obtaining adequate quantities of fishery input (rank1) followed by fungicides/herbicides, (rank 2) then fertilizer (rank 3) but the least difficulties in agro processing and agro forestry (rank 6).

In Akwa-Ibom State, fungicides/herbicides are the most difficult to obtain (rank 1) followed by fertilizer (rank 2) while fishery input are the least difficult to obtain (rank 7). In both ADP’s fungicides/herbicides are the most difficult to obtain in required quantities (rank 1), followed by fertilizer (rank 2) and livestock (rank 3), while the least difficult to obtain are agro forestry and agro processing production input. The finding corroborates that of Ilevboaje (1999) whose study sample cited sprayers as the most difficult input to obtain, followed by herbicides, fertilizers, insecticides/fungicides and improved seeds in that order of decreasing intensity. In a situation where farmers cannot obtain required quantities of input, adoption of innovations are bound to be substantially low.

Difficulty associated with timely supply of required production input

As indicated in table 2, farmers in Abia cited fishery, fertilizer, fungicides/herbicides and livestock as inputs that presents greatest difficulties in terms of timely supply. Agroforestry and agroprocessing inputs are usually available as at when due. In Akwa-Ibom State, the order of lateness in supply begins with fertilizer (rank 1), followed by livestock (rank 2), fungicides/herbicides (rank 3), and improved seeds (rank 4). In both ADPs, fertilizer tops the list of input usually supplied late with a mean of 3.35 (rank 1) followed by fishery, then fungicides/herbicides and livestock. Only improved seeds and agroprocessing inputs are usually readily available when required. The finding that farmers experienced maximum difficulties with timely supply of fertilizer, fishery, fungicides/herbicides and livestock input confirms the observations of Akobundu (1987) and Ilevbaoje (1999) that farmers are confronted with unlimited supply of pests that have devastating effects on crops growth as well as effects of depleting soil fertility. Agriculture is a time-bond work. Late supply of input will have to be curtailed if food sufficiency is to be attained in Nigeria.

Farmers' ratings of the cost of required production input

As shown in table 3, farmers in Abia State cited fishery, fungicides/herbicides, fertilizer, livestock, agroforestry, improved seeds and agroprocessing as the costliest in this order of decreasing intensity. In Akwa-Ibom, fertilizer was cited as the costliest, followed by fungicides/herbicides, livestock and fisheries.

In both ADPs, fisheries tops the list even as farmers rated it as being the costliest, with a mean rating of 2.65 (rank 1), followed by fertilizer, fungicides/herbicides, then livestock, agroforestry, improved seeds and agroprocessing. The minimum difficulty experienced by farmers in terms of the cost of improved agroprocessing may be due to the fact that most farmers store their planting materials (seeds) on farm. That most farmers in the area of study cited the cost of fishery, fertilizer fungicides/herbicides, and livestock input as being beyond their reach requires urgent attention. No amount of agricultural extension effort will produce expected positive impact in the absence of adequate and timely supply of agricultural input at affordable prices to farmers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Farmers in Abia and Akwa-Ibom States are experiencing varying degrees of difficulties with regard to obtaining adequate quantities, timely supply and costs of selected input. Fungicides/herbicides, fertilizer and fisheries input were cited by all farmers as the most difficult to obtain in adequate quantity, most untimely in supply and the most costly respectively. In order to minimize these difficulties, the following recommendations are pertinent:

- i. Scientists that are formulating production recommendations for extension should emphasize technologies that have low demand for farm inputs.
- ii. Input Agencies should extend distribution outlets to the rural areas and package inputs in smaller quantities (e.g. fertilizer) in line with farmers' requirements.
- iii. Government should review its policy of withdrawal of subsidy on farm input and review upwards the level of subsidy on fungicides/herbicides, fertilizer, livestock inputs as these presents the maximum difficulties to farmers in the areas of study.

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