

## SHORT COMMUNICATION II

# REGULARITY AND PUBLISHING TRENDS IN 'THE NIGERIAN AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL': 1980-2000

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### ABSTRACT

The Nigerian Agricultural Journal (NAJ) has been in publication for more than three decades now. The objectives of this paper were: to determine the regularity of production, and analyze its publishing trends between 1980 and 2000. All the published editions were identified and analyzed. The results showed that NAJ has not been published regularly. Only 38% of the proposed issues were published. Content analysis of the published articles revealed that 55% of the articles were in crop sciences while 17% and 12% were in soil science and animal science respectively. There were little or no published articles in engineering, food science and processing, and fisheries. Based on the findings, recommendations were made to ensure the sustainability of NAJ.

### Introduction

The research journal is the most popular and most appropriate medium for

communicating research findings. Research results (Bgoya, 1992) showed that even at the highest levels where research personnel were likely to have

more access to other channels such as television or CD-Rom technology, over 80% of the respondents indicated their preference for book or journal as a means of receiving information. Research journals publish scientific papers that communicate new and original information to other scientists (Stapleton *et al*, 1995).

For the researchers, the journal is the most important channel to make his/her work known. No research finding, however significant or important, is useful unless it is published. According to O'Connor (1993) "you must document your work thoroughly before other scientists can repeat that piece of work, build on it or criticize it". Journal publication helps to increase knowledge, stimulate debate and open new insight to a field (Stapleton, 1987).

However, journal publication is fraught with many problems in Africa. Some of these problems include, the lack of a paying market, low readership level and technical and financial hurdle in production and distribution (Spore, 2000). Added to these problems are the dearth of contributors, low level of technical writing ability, lack of publishing in some vital areas of scientific research, and short life span of most journals (Alemna *et al*, 2000).

The Nigerian Agricultural Journal (NAJ) is a bi-annual publication of the Agricultural Society of Nigeria. It has been in production for more than three decades, making it the oldest agricultural journal still in print in Nigeria. The objectives of this paper therefore are, to determine the regularity of its production, analyze the publishing trends, from 1980-2000, and make recommendations for sustainable production of the Nigeria Agricultural Journal.

## Methodology

The NAJ was content analyzed to determine its publishing trends between 1980 and 2000, inclusive. In determining the trends, the fields of publication were divided into nine broad areas viz:

socio-economics, crop science, forest and environmental management, fisheries, engineering, food science and processing, soil science, animal science, and pest management. Each of the NAJ issues published within the study period was then analyzed to determine how many articles fell within each area. Only full articles were considered. Reviews and announcements were not included in the analysis.

To ensure that all the NAJ published within the study period were included in the analysis, literature search was conducted at the following libraries, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike; National Root Crops Research Institute, Umudike, University of Ibadan, and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan. The personal libraries of the current Editor-in-Chief and the Business Manager of NAJ were also consulted.

In presenting the data, the period of study was divided into two, 1980-1989 and 1990-2000. This was intended to properly identify the publishing trends within the period. The data were analyzed using simple frequency counts and the results are presented in tables and pie-chart.

## Results and Discussion

### Frequency of Production

Results from Table I show that between 1980 and 2000, 42 issues of the journal were supposed to have been published. However, only 16 (38%) of this number were published. From 1980-1989, only

40% of the proposed issues were published, while 36.4% of the proposed issues were actually published between 1990 and 2000. There were no publications in 1980, 1981, 1983, 1984, 1992, 1994, 1996 and 1997. In 1982 and 1985, the two issues that were supposed to be published in year were combined in one issue [Vol. 17 & 18 1982); Vol. 19 & 20 (1985)]. However, the volume numbers were maintained serially as the issues were published. One observation from the data was that the journal was gradually becoming an annual publication instead of a bi-annual one. This could be due to the high cost of production and low level of patronage by the intended audience. The income of the research scientist in Nigeria has been significantly increased in recent years, so the problem is not low purchasing power. In the 1980-89 period, a total of 134 papers were published, while between 1990 and 2000, 102 articles were published, showing a 36% decreased in published articles.

Another problem encountered during data collection was that there was no national library that had all the editions in stock. Only IITA (an international institute) library had all the editions in stock.

#### **Publishing Trend.**

Table 2 shows that the majority of articles published (55%) were in Crops science. This was followed by Soil Science (17%) and Animal Science (12%).

This publishing trend was not surprising. The vast majority of agricultural research scientists in Nigeria are involved in arable food crops. Out of the 18 agricultural research institutes in Nigeria, 5 are involved in arable food crops. Although forest (tree) crops like cocoa, rubber and oil palm received research attention long before emphasis shifted to food crops, there were fewer people researching into

forestry and environmental management. And, apparently, those in that research field were either not publishing much, or not publishing in NAJ. It is however surprising that socio-economic studies which cut across all the fields only accounted for 7% of all the articles published.

#### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The data from this study revealed that the publication of NAJ has not been regular. Instead of being a bi-annual publication, it is gradually becoming an annual publication.

The results show that articles in agronomy and soil science accounted for 72% of all the published articles, while fields like engineering, food science and processing, and fisheries had few or no articles published. Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. Efforts should be made to publish NAJ as regularly as it should be. This earns it the respect it deserves both in the international and national scientific world.
2. The Editorial Board and the Executive committee of the Agricultural Society of Nigeria should seek for corporate sponsors of NAJ's publication to ensure regularity and timeliness. These sponsors, like the agro-chemical and engineering companies could be given the outside back cover page to advertise their products.
3. NAJ should be advertised in similar local and international journals/ publications, so as to attract the interest of scholars. There may be many young scientists who are not aware of the journal.

4. Deliberate efforts should be made to attract scholarly articles from such fields as socio-economics, fisheries, food science and processing, engineering, and forest and environmental management. This will make the journal more balanced in coverage. In return,

NAJ will receive wider subscriptions.

5. The Editorial Board should ensure that all the editions of the journal are collected and kept in a library in the secretariat of the Agricultural Society of Nigeria

Table 1: Proposed and Actual published Issues of NAJ

	Proposed Volumes	Issues Numbers	Published Volumes	Issues Numbers	% Published
1980-89	10	20	6	8	40.0
1990-2000	11	22	7	8	36.4
Total	21	42	13	16	38.1

Table 2: Articles' Publication According to Research Fields

Fields of Publication	1980-1989	1990-2000	%
Socio-economic	7	9	6.8
Crop Science	74	55	54.7
Forest and Envir. Mgt.	4	3	3.0
Fisheries	-	-	-
Engineering	2	-	0.8
Food Science & Processing	-	1	0.4
Soil Science	26	15	17.3
Animal Science	16	12	11.9
Pest Management	5	7	5.1
Total	134	102	

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