

FARMERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE ROLE OF MASS MEDIA IN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN OMALA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KOGI STATE

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Abstract

This study was carried out to find out farmers' perceptions on the role of mass media in sustainable agricultural development in Omala Local Government Area of Kogi State. Three specific purposes guided the study while three research questions were answered. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study is 1226, which consist of 702 registered farmers and 524 extension agents of the state ministry of agriculture in the Omala Local Government of Kogi State while purposive sampling techniques was used to select a sample of 90 registered farmers and 10 extension agents as respondents for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a thirty-nine items structured questionnaire. The questionnaire used was validated by three experts in the agricultural education department University of Nigeria Nsukka. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha method which yielded a coefficient of 0.82. Data was collected through direct contact with the respondents; and analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The findings of the study revealed that mass media plays an important role in disseminating agricultural information to farmers. Also, sources of information used by extension agents to communicate to farmers include: radio, television, newspaper among others. The study concluded that mass media plays an important role in disseminating agricultural information to farmers. The study recommended that the individual farmers should be encouraged to join agricultural cooperative societies for easy access to information despite the other means of information dissemination to farmers.

Keywords: sustainable agricultural development, Mass media and Farmers' perception

Introduction

Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy of most countries of the World; providing foods, raw materials, employment, income, revenue, foreign exchange, and improving the country's balance payment. Agriculture is held in high esteem in both developed and developing countries including Nigeria. Generally, agriculture is the growing of both plants and animals for human needs. Agriculture is the most comprehensive word used to denote the many ways in which crop plan and domestic animals sustain the human population by providing food and other products (David & Doris, 2014), Agriculture cannot be successful without agricultural development.

Agricultural development brings about revolution in the agriculture development industry to give birth to an agriculture which is profit giving and at the same time eco-friendly (Grmay, 2006). Agricultural development means providing assistance to the crop producers with the help of various agricultural resources. Providing protection, assisting in the research sphere, employing latest techniques controlling pests and facilitating diversity all fall within the purview of agricultural development. Contextually,

agricultural development is to bring in new technologies and improve varieties of crops in order to have great agricultural products. There is a need for sustainable agriculture.

Sustainable agriculture develops a new approach of agricultural production that the economic and social benefits for the generations without compromising the capacity of the future generation fulfills their proper agricultural demands and without injuring the ecological processes. This definition implies degradation or pollution of the environment and ecological processes must not be sustainable in the long-term rather the permanent conditioning of soil quality and the environment must permanently be given priority. One strategy or approach through which sustainable agricultural development can be achieved is through sustainable farming. Sustainable farming system includes being sustainable in agricultural production, sustainable in rural and being sustainable in environmental and ecological agricultural systems. Sustainable farming is a natural process. Sustainable agricultural development involves farming practices that

promote long-term ecological balance while addressing economic and social media (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. FAO, 2021). It minimizes waste and does less damage to the environment and yet it's profitable. Contextually, sustainable agriculture is using natural products in the sense that they will uphold their productive capacity and reduce harmful impact on the ecosystem. In order to maintain sustainable agricultural development, there is a need for passage of information to the farmers by using mass media.

Information plays a vital role in keeping farmers abreast with the global latest innovation in agriculture (Eremi, Oikoi & Ogar, 2023). The electronic gadgetry of information technology like video tape recorders, mobile cinema vans and other audio-visual equipment like sound slide system, slides and film strips are also included in electronic media (Isaac, 2024). In the view of David (2012), mass media is any of the means of communication. Seema (2010) opined that mass media is any mechanical or electrical device that multiples messages and takes it to a large number of people simultaneously. Anyanwu and Udoh (2022) view mass media as an important element needed to effectively transfer technologies to farmers. The study explores the role of mass media in promoting sustainable agricultural development in Omala LGA, focusing on farmers' perspectives. Mass media, reaching a large audience through internet, television, and radio, can promote community involvement and share best practices. However, understanding farmers' perceptions is crucial for creating targeted interventions. The study aims to understand gaps, opportunities, and challenges in using mass media as a catalyst for agricultural sustainability.

Statement of the Problem

The advent of modern communication facilities spurred up radical changes in the field of agriculture. These changes have been characterized by new methods of doing things with emphasis on Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Technology is an alteration in the life of equipment, character, knowledge and method of doing things. The modern mass media facilities resulted in the acquisition of the needed competencies by the extension agent and the farmers resorted to being effective and efficient to operate those facilities in order to be relevant in the dissemination of agricultural information. In the time past the popular mass media use in the dissemination of agricultural information is the radio. Today modern mass media such as computers, the internet, mobile phones and fax machines have replaced the old means

of mass media. This has also created impetus on the agricultural extension agent as there is a need for improvement in the extension's approach in the dissemination of information to the farmers in Omala Local Government Area. However, the relevance of the modern mass media on the dissemination of agricultural information have not been properly felt. For instance, most extension agents are not efficient in the use of the modern mass media.

Regarding modern mass media, such as the print and the electronic media, the rural people seem to be marginalized due to several factors. Those factors may likely be mechanical inefficiency in the country and level of literacy. This work tends to find out the suitable means of communication between the farmers in Omala Local Government Area and the use of mass media such as television, radio, internet and so on as it relates to agricultural development in the Area.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to find out farmers' perception on the role of mass media vis-à-vis the development of agriculture in Omala Local Government Area of Kogi State. Specifically, the study will seek to:

1. Determine the role of mass media in dissemination of agricultural information to the farmers.
2. Identify major sources of information used by extension agents to communicate to farmers.
3. Determine the constraints encountered by extension agents in the use of mass media in disseminating information to the farmers.

Research Questions

1. What are the roles of mass media in dissemination of agricultural information to the farmers?
2. What are the major sources of information used by extension agents to communicate to farmers?
3. What are the constraints encountered by extension agents in the use of mass media in disseminating information to the farmers?

Significance of the Study

The finding of the study will be beneficial to: farmers, extension agents, and government and future researchers. The findings from the study will benefit the farmers because their formal perception will change. It will also help the farmer to see the relevance of mass media in agricultural development and how they can increase their production and make more profit. The findings of this study will be beneficial to the extension agent because it will ease them of passing information

to farmers in the sense that it will help them to know the minds of the farmers concerning the media. The findings will equally benefit the government because if the farmer increases production through the enlightenment of the mass media. The government will make more money through the payment of taxes and it will boost the economy of the nation.

Finally, the study will be useful to the future researchers in the sense that it acts as a reference material to the researcher on farmers' perception on the role of mass media in sustainable agricultural development.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was chosen for the study. The study was on farmers' perceptions on the role of mass media in sustainable agricultural development in Omala Local Government area of Kogi state. Shona (2023) describe descriptive research design as accurately and systematically describe a population, situation or phenomenon. The population of the study was 1226, comprising 702 registered farmers and 524 extension agents. The sample size for the study was 100 respondents. The instrument that was used for data collection for this study was a structured questionnaire and an interview schedule. The instrument was based on a 4-point rating scale which included each of the following items as

Table 1: Mean ratings of the respondents on the role of mass media in disseminating agricultural information to farmers.

S/N	Item Description	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Passing new innovation to farmers	3.80	0.61	Agree
2	Creating awareness on the use of improving varieties	2.90	0.77	Agree
3	Communicating the use of pesticides to the farmers.	3.25	0.44	Agree
4	Communicating the new method of Weeding, using chemicals to farmers	3.30	0.80	Agree
5	Creating awareness protecting the animals against infesting disease	3.40	0.83	Agree
6	Demonstrating through television and radio	2.70	0.91	Agree
7	Group/ panel discussion on agricultural programme	3.65	0.87	Agree
8	Pass new farming production	3.20	0.80	Agree
9	Farm expansion	3.60	0.50	Agree
10	Increases number of crop production	3.15	0.66	Agree
11	Increases in farm production	2.80	0.41	Agree
12	Establish Poultry	3.55	0.60	Agree
13	Adoption of more farm technology	3.55	0.51	Agree
14	Improved education	2.90	0.76	Agree
15	Improved level of socialization	2.95	0.76	Agree
16	Increases farm input	2.85	0.60	Agree

strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). The response categories were assigned numerical values as 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The questionnaire was validated by three experts, one from University of Nigeria Nsukka and two from Kogi State University, all from the department of Agricultural Education.

The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha method which yielded a coefficient of 0.82. The researcher administered and collected the instrument from the respondents. The data collected for the study were arranged, coded and was analyzed through the use of statistical packages for the social science (SPSS) computer program such as tables, mean and standard deviation were employed for analysis. Rating was done by means of ranking the relevance of mass media by the respondents on a scale 4-1 with 4 = strongly agree, 3 = agree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree. The decision rule for answering the research questions was based on 2-50 to 4.00 is agreed while 1.00 to 2.00 is disagree because is below the cut-off mark.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the role of mass media in disseminating agricultural information to the farmers?

The data presented in Table 1 above showed that the sixteen (16) items on the role of mass media in disseminating agricultural information to farmers had their means range from 2.70 to 3.80. These mean scores are above the cut off mark of 2.50. It therefore implies that the majority of the respondents agreed that

Table 2: Mean ratings of the respondents on major sources of information used by extension agents to communicate to farmers.

S/N	Varieties	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Radio	3.32	0.61	Agree
2	Television	3.11	0.77	Agree
3	Newspaper	3.25	0.44	Agree
4	Print media	2.60	0.80	Agree
5	G.S.M	3.02	0.53	Agree
6	Internet	3.35	0.94	Agree
7	Slide presentation	3.88	0.57	Agree

all the 16 items are the role of mass media in disseminating agricultural information to farmers.

Research Question 2: What are the major sources of information used by extension agents to communicate to farmers?

The data presented in the Table 2 above showed that the seven (7) items on sources of mass media in disseminating agricultural information had their means ranged from 2.60 to 3.92. These mean scores are above the cut off mark of 2.50. It therefore implies that the majority of respondents agreed that all the 7-

Table 3: Mean ratings of respondents on the constraints encountered by the extension agents in the use of mass media in disseminating information to farmers

S/N	Variable	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Poor generation of electricity	3.11	0.63	Agree
2	Illiteracy of the farmers	2.80	0.91	Agree
3	Lack of manpower	3.66	0.44	Agree
4	Inadequate finance	3.45	0.99	Agree
5	Lack of personnel	2.85	1.50	Agree
6	Inadequate policy of government	3.44	1.24	Agree
7	Non- accessibility of infrastructure and facilities	3.65	0.88	Agree
8	Lack of transmission station	2.90	0.88	Agree
9	Language barrier	2.95	1.37	Agree
10	Poor radio and television signal	3.55	0.51	Agree
11	Inability to respond immediately to the source	2.95	0.68	Agree
12	High cost of purchase and maintaining media source	3.75	1.18	Agree
13	Power failure	3.35	1.24	Agree
14	Poor public relation of the extension workers	3.35	0.57	Agree
15	Agricultural information on radio and television is always aired at odd hours when farmers who desire such information have gone to farm	2.75	1.30	Agree
16	Lack of moral electrification / constant power interruption in communities that have electricity supply	3.30	0.53	Agree

mass media are effective in disseminating agricultural information to the farmers.

Research Question 3: What are the constraints encountered by extension agents in the use of mass media in disseminating information to the farmers?

The data presented in Table 3 above showed that the sixteen (16) items on mean ratings of respondents according to the constraints encountered by the extension agents in the use of mass media in disseminating information to farmers had their mean ranged from 2.75 to 3.65. These mean scores are above the cut off mark of 2.50. It therefore implies that the majority of the respondents agreed that all the 16 items are constraints encountered by the extension agents in the use of mass media in disseminating information to farmers.

Discussion of the Findings

The finding on the role of mass media in disseminating agricultural information to farmers showed that mass media contribute in the following ways in the dissemination of agricultural information passing new innovation to farmers; creating awareness on the use of improving varieties of crops; communicating the use of pesticide to farmers ;communicating the new method of weeding using chemicals to farmers; creating awareness protecting the animals against infecting diseases; demonstration through television and radio and groups/ panel discussion on agricultural programme. Others are passing new farming production, farm expansion; increasing the number of crop production, increasing farm production, establishing poultry, adoption of more farm technology, increasing farm increases, improving education, improving level socialization. This finding is in line with the opinion of Ndanitsha (2009) who asserted the majority of respondents develop their tomato production through demonstration and suggestion made by extension workers on television and radio broadcast programmes. Also, the finding corresponds with the view of Nworgu (2006) that mass media are important in providing information for rural communities to make informed decisions regarding their farming activities, especially in the rural area. The information as we know is the key for success in the operation and management process of agricultural activities. To a large extent, mass media serve as a variable instrument for information dissemination in agriculture. The findings are in agreement with Ajah, Ofem, Effa and Ubabuku (2022) and Eta, Idiku & Eta (2023). The study is equally, in line with the study of Nichola-Ere (2017) who identified the mobile phone, radio and television as some of the communication media accessed by the farmers.

The findings of the study revealed that the sources of information used by extension Agents to communicate to farmers include: radio, television, newspaper, print media, GSM, internet and slide

presentation can be used in dissemination of agricultural information. This finding is in agreement with Ekumankama (2000) who observed that a media programme is usually capable of extending messages to the audience to matter where they may be as long as they have a receiver with adequate supply of power. It also corroborates with the view of Munyua (2010) that rural radio was successful in delivering agricultural information to a target group. It also confirms the view of Abu (2009) that people in the rural areas are still hesitant to use the advanced media that are available. The findings of the study are in line with the study of Offiong-Okoho (2021) and Milanomic (2021) who observed that farmers need a variety of information to improve their farming operation. The study is also in line with Okwu and David (2011) who identifies mobile phones, radio, television and newspapers as some of the frequently available and used extension channels of communication.

The findings of the study question three revealed that constraint encountered by the extension agents in the use of mass media in disseminating information are poor generating of electricity, illiteracy of the farmers, lack of manpower, inadequate finance, lack of personnel, inadequate policy of the government, non-accessibility of infrastructure and facilities, lack of transmission station, language barriers, poor radio and television signals, inability to respond immediately to the source, poor public relation of the extension workers and agricultural information on radio and television is always aired at odd hours when farmers have gone to farm. The majority of the respondents agreed that all the 16 items are constraints encountered by extension agents in the use of mass media in disseminating information to farmers. This study is not in line with the study of Idiku, Eremi, Ntui, Nwogu and Besong (2022) that the main sources of information to farmers are mobile phones, radio and the television. This study is in line with the study of Nawab, Badar, Nana, Zulfiqar, Sohaib, Hafiz, Siyad, Rizwan, Tahir, Abdullah and Awais, (2020) which stated that lack of communication and lack of understanding of these latest technology growers does not benefit from new tools in the area of work.

Conclusion

From the concluded study, it was found out that mass media plays an important role in disseminating agricultural information to farmers, sources of information used by extension agents to communicate to farmers include: radio, television, newspapers, print media, G.S.M., internet film, slide presentation. It was also found out that the government

contributes towards effective use of mass media in disseminating agricultural information. There are constraints encountered by the extension agents in the use of mass media in disseminating information.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. The individual farmers should be encouraged to join agricultural cooperative societies for easy access to information despite the other means of information dissemination to farmers.
2. The federal and the state government should corroborate in the electrification of rural communities to make access to information easy to farmers.
3. More efforts should be geared in planning agricultural programmes which many farmers
7. may utilize to improve their activities via radio and television especially in the evening.
4. The media should liaise with research institutes, for example National Agricultural Research Extension and Liaison Services (NAERLS), to be able to educate farmers on the latest innovations in agricultural practices.
5. The stakeholders for example, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other corporate bodies should endeavor to sponsor some of the agricultural programmes to help farmers' education.
6. Rural television viewing centers should be constructed and equipped to educate farmers on new science-based agricultural practices, safety and citizenship.

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