

ANALYSIS OF EXTENSION SERVICE NEEDS OF WOMEN CASSAVA FARMERS IN AKINYELE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OYO STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

This paper identifies extension service needs of women cassava farmers and discusses the relevance of such needs to Agricultural development. The study was conducted in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State. Structured interview schedule was used to collect information from one hundred and twenty (120) women cassava farmers. Analysis of the data collected revealed that 59.6% of the respondents were between the ages categories of 31-45 years old while 21. 0% was above 46 years old, majority of (64.5 %) had low level of education and 70.7% had many years of farming experience and 95.8% source for information from family/relation/friends. Their levels of knowledge of improved cassava varieties, fertilizer and pesticides were high and extension service were require on source of farm chemical (M = 3.62) Method of fertilizer application (M=3.43) marketing strategies of cassava tuber and its product (M=3.32). There should be deliberate attempts that would be directed at improving women farmers through the encouragement of agricultural extension agents to train women farmers on the improve crop production practices.

KEYWORDS: Analysis, ExtensionService, Needs, Women, Farmers, Oyo State

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural extension literally means the transfer of some Agricultural related knowledge from one point (the Source) to the other receiver) with the aim of increasing Agricultural productivity and income (Oladosu, 2004) Agricultural extension service is an educational process that aimed at communication of useful information to farmer and helping them to learn how to use the resources within their reach to solve their own problem. In 1985 International Decade for women Equality Development was declared by the United Nations. (Eddy, 2002). This step was taking in other to encourage nations, government organizations, International agencies, research and educational institutes to give priority to the development of women. Food and Agricultural organization of united Nation (FAO, 1990) emphasized the need for women to be integrated into any programme designed to develop the agricultural sector. According to Williams (1998), women's role in agriculture is assumed to be low and only supportive of their husbands. In a similar vein, Okojie(2003) opined that the erroneous belief that women are secondary farmers whose role was limited to giving assistance to their husbands probably explained their non- inclusion in the past development programmes. In analysis of Gender roles in cassava production, Ajayi and Laogun (2005) reveals that the female farmer have for the past few decades contributed significantly to Agricultural productivity in Nigeria. While technology development and transfer have been the main focus of agricultural extension, that have been involved several extension teaching methods like individual group and mass media methods.

However, studies have shown that most rural women are farmers (Williams, 1999) and are responsible for the production of 80 percent of the food in Africa (Development Communication Report, 2003). The FAO (2002) estimates show that women contribute over 40 percent of the total agricultural lab our force in two – thirds of 82 developing Countries in the world. Osuala, (2002) states that African Women are significantly involved in subsistence agriculture, while Eddy, 2002 Olayide and Bello, 2000) Classified women as the backbone or pillar of small scale farming in Nigeria. Williams *et al* (1998) assert that education is one of the variables for achieving economic growth, and extension education as its concerned with the educational task of disseminating useful and modern agricultural information to farmers. Women farmers, like their male counterpart, need training in technical knowledge if their productivity is to be enhanced. Scientific and technological information is an essential resource for agricultural development, and a crucial part of the information dissemination process as an understanding of the educational needs of farmers. This is necessary in order to make extension campaign relevant to farmer's socio-economic conditions and enhance the effectiveness of the extension agency (Rogers

and Shoemaker, 1999).

The transformation of traditional or peasant agriculture, of which women are the life- blood must of necessity emphasis the training and education of rural women. Williams (1998) asserts that knowledge of innovation is a prerequisite for innovation adoption and for the development of the agricultural sector. Hence the study analyzes the extension needs of women cassava farmers in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Specific objectives of this study are to:

- 1) Describe socio-economic characteristics of the respondents
- 2) Identify the respondents' sources of information on improved technologies
- 3) Examine the respondents level of awareness of improved technologies associated with cassava production.
- 4) Identify respondent's information needs and extension service needs.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State. This area consists of one Agricultural Extension Block. Multistage sampling technique was used to select one hundred and twenty (120) women cassava farmers for the study. Four extension cells, out of eight cells in the area were randomly selected and two communities were randomly selected from each selected cell, making a total of eight communities selected for the study. Fifteen (15) respondents were systematically selected from each community, thereby making thirty (30) respondents chosen from each extension cell. Finally a total of one hundred and twenty (120) Women cassava farmers constituted the sample size for the study.

Structured interview schedule was employed in collecting data from the respondents. Analysis involved frequencies counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation, also four points likert scale was used to determined respondents perception selected farming practices. Weighted mean score value of 2.50 and above indicates that the respondents perception on the selected variables is important. Value below 2.50 WMS is taken as not important.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Data in Table 1 show that majority (22.5%) of the respondents were between 41-45 years old. Further in the table it was reveal that the second largest are category of the respondents (21.0%) was above 46 years old. 19.2% of the respondents were between the age brackets 31-35 years constituted 17.5% of the total. Only 11.7% and 8.3% of the respondents were between age category of 26-30 years and less than 25 years old respectively. Analysis of the results gives the average age of the respondents as 42.5 years with a standard deviation of 10.5 years, implying that respondents' deviation from the mean age was not more or less than 10.5 years. This result indicates that about 71.0 percent of the respondents fell within the range of 26-45 years. The result is suggesting that majority of the respondents were relatively young. Their younger age may assist them to receptive to new information as regarding farming practices. Also table 1 show that the educational attainment of the respondents was low. Since 64.5% were not educated beyond Junior Secondary education, 17.5% and 10.0% attended senior secondary school and had tertiary education certificate respectively, while only 8.3% of the respondent had Quranic and adult education Certificate. Their low level of education may likely affect their knowledge of innovations, because educated people tend to embrace knowledge of modern farming practices (Williams *et al* 1998, Eddy, 2002). Table 1 further shows that 33.3% of the respondents had been farming for 16-20 years 22.5% for 6-10 years and 20.8% for 11-15 years, 16.6% have been in the farming activities enterprise for more than 20 years, while 6.7% of the respondents had been farming for not more than five years. This implying that majority (70.7%) of the respondents has been farming for 11 years and above. This long year of farming is likely to have exposed them to modern farming information on cassava production. This finding conforms to Eddy, (2002) who reported that 55.8% of the respondents have been in farming for 16 years and above.

Sources of Information on Improved Technologies

Table 2 reveals that major source of information for the respondents was family/relations/friends (95.8%) This finding confirms the results of Birckhacuser, *et al* (1991) and Eddy, (2002) that other farmers are the major source of information for most farmers. About 39.0% of the respondents obtained their information through the

radio, 27.5% extension agents, 12.5% newspapers, 4.2% mobile phone and only 2.5% of the respondents obtained information from internet. This finding agrees with the result of Eddy (2002) that 89.2%, 41.7% and 8.3% of the respondents obtained information on farming practices through, family, radio and extension agents respectively.

Awareness of Cassava Production Related Technologies

Table 3 shows that 100.0% of the respondents had knowledge of improved cassava varieties, 97.5% knew about the use of fertilizer, 81.7% were aware of pesticide, 58.0% were aware of recommended harvesting times, 46.7% knew about recommended planting spacing. While 40.8% and 30.8% were aware of recommended planting time and use of herbicides respectively. The total number of the respondents was more than 120 because most of the women cassava farmers were aware of more than one technology. This finding agrees with results of Eddy, (2002) who reported that 98.3% knew about the use of fertilizer 55.0% were aware of pesticide and 34.0% were aware of the use of herbicides.

Information needs of the respondents on Cassava Production

Table 4 shows the areas in which the respondents need attention of extension officer since 78.0% of the respondents were ignorant of the recommended harvesting time. This is because harvesting of crops at the recommended time prevents spoilage from attack of pest and diseases. About 78.0% indicated recommended planting time, because planting of crops at the right time influence efficient crop growth and productivity, 69.2% needed information on planting spacing. It is important since crop overcrowding will lead to poor yield regardless of the improved crop varieties been used, 60.0% needed information on pesticides 49.2% of the respondents needed information on herbicides. This is important because they require the knowledge of the types of herbicides to use as well as the application methods. While 12.5% also need information on the use of fertilizer. Farmers may require knowledge on fertilizer application methods and quantity to apply. This conforms to Eddy (2002) that fertilizer needed to boost crop productivity especially in areas where the soil nutrients have been depleted.

Extension Service needs on cassava production

Table 5 reveals the respondents perception of the activities involved in cassava production which require extension service as indicated that they need training on source of farm chemical with weighted mean score ($M = 3.62$) rank order 1, methods of fertilizer application ($M=3.43$) rank order 2, marketing strategies of cassava tuber and its products ($M=3.32$) rank order 3, source of improved varieties of cassava ($M=3.29$) rank order 4. Furthermore respondents needs training on types of fertilizer for cassava production ($M=3.20$) rank order 5, pesticides appropriate application method and Quantity to apply ($M=2.75$) rank order 6, herbicides appropriate application method ($M=2.56$) rank order 7 and source of credit facilities ($M=2.53$) rank order 8. Above mentioned practices are considered to be very important to the respondents as their mean score exceeds 2.50. This result indicates that respondents were interested in increasing their productivity and to be assuring of reliable sources of credit facilities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study has highlighted that; it is evident for women cassava farmers to have training needs which should be met in the course of development programme directed at them and rural populace. It is important however to stress that in order to sustain the interest and motivation of women cassavas farmers towards their economic, empowerment, the training needs should be addressed as emanated from this study that women cassava farmers desired training was prominent in all the farming practices listed. The implication of this for rural development is that empowerment of women farmers through adequate training in all the expressed areas of training in cassava production is a predisposing factors to women farmers' sustainable livelihoods. Efforts should be directed at meeting these felt needs for the improvement of the production of cassava, which will in turn increase the financial strength of women farmers. In order to achieve rural development in Nigeria, which is to increase rural productivity and income and generally enhanced the quality of life of women farmers, meeting the extension service needs of women farmers in cassava production becomes imperatives. There should be deliberate attempts that should be directed at improving women farmers who are involved in food production. This could be done by improving their knowledge and skill at performance of the listed practices in cassava production. Also agricultural extension agents should be encouraged to train women farmers on the improved crop production practices. The most effective way of achieving this is through monitoring and evaluation of women extension programme. Therefore the extension service needs identified in this study remains essential to sustainable rural development programme of a nation.

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Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
< 25	10	8.3
26-30	14	11.7
31-35	21	17.5
36-40	23	19.2
41-45	27	22.5
46 and above	25	20.8
Total	120	100.0
Educational Level		
No formal education	27	22.5
Primary education	30	25.0
Junior secondary education	20	16.6
Senior secondary education	21	17.5
Tertiary education	12	10.0
Quranic and Adult education	10	8.3
Total	120	100.0
Years of farming experience		
1-5	08	6.7
6-10	27	22.5
11-15	25	20.8
16-20	40	33.3
20 and above	20	16.6
Total	120	100.0

Table 2: Sources of Information on improved technologies

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Radio	46	38.3
Newspapers	15	12.5
Extension Agents	33	27.5
Family/Relations/Friends	115	95.8
Mobile phone	05	4.2
Internet	03	2.5
Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2009

* Multiple Responses

Table 3: Level of awareness of cassava production related technologies

Technologies	Frequency	Percentage
Improved cassava varieties	120	100.0
Pesticides	98	81.7
Herbicides	37	30.8
Fertilizer	117	97.5
Recommended planting time	49	40.8
Recommended planting spacing	56	46.7
Recommended harvesting time	69	57.5
Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2009

* Multiple Responses

Table 4: Information needs of the respondents on technologies associated to cassava production

Technologies	Frequency	Percentage
Pesticides	72	60.0
Herbicides	59	49.2
Fertilizer	15	12.5
Recommended planting time	92	76.7
Recommended planting spacing	83	69.2
Recommended harvesting time	94	78.3
Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2009

* Multiple Responses

Table 5: Extension service needs on cassava production by the respondents

Areas of Extension Services needs	Weighted mean score
Source of farm chemicals	3.62
Methods of fertilizer application	3.43
Types of fertilizer for cassava production	3.20
Pesticide appropriate application method and quantity	2.75
Herbicides appropriate application method	2.56
Source of improve varieties of cassava	3.29
Hiring source of farm implements and machineries	2.14
Recommended planting spacing	2.00
Recommended planting time	1.78
Recommended harvesting time	2.05
Source of credit facilities	2.34
Preservation methods of cassava	2.34
Preservation methods of cassava products	1.82
Marketing strategies of cassava tubers and its products	3.32

Source: Field Survey 2009

Weighted Mean Score (W M S) > 2.5 is important

Weighted Mean Score(W M S) < 2.5 is not important

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