

**Agricultural Information Consulting for Farm Production Optimization: A Case Study of Kubau
Local Government Area of Kaduna State in Nigeria**

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Abstract

This study investigated the agricultural information consulting for farm optimization: A case study of Kubau local government area of Kaduna state. This agricultural information consulting perhaps is only airs on radio programs, while other channels were not consumed in the provision of agricultural information consulting services. This hinders the attainment of farm production optimization, qualitative research method was employed to gather an in depth understanding of phenomenon, using case study as a research design. Findings indicated that farmers in Kubau local government area were provided with agricultural information only on radio programs. On-the-site services at farms does not been offered by agricultural experts. farmers prepare taking suggestion from their peer-farmers, or stand by what they observed been practice in their community locally. Absence of other sources of information minimized farm production optimization. Agricultural forums and online communities' platforms can be established where farmers and agricultural professionals can connect, share information, and seek advice whenever necessary. Agricultural publications and magazines can be translated into slate-projector films. This could help gears farm practices towards farm production optimization and insights. Government agricultural agencies should provide farmers with help lines in that, farmers can instantly at farms reach them with their questions at hand, for an assistance. Agricultural workshops and events could be of great advantage to farmers, where they can have access to agricultural information.

Keywords: Agricultural information consulting, farm production optimization, farmers in Kubau local government.

Introduction

The provision of agricultural information is very important in the overall increase of food production. Zhang (2018) stressed that, a thorough understanding of user information needs and information seeking behaviour is fundamental to the provision of successful information services. The international institute for communication and development (IICD) roundtable workshop for the agriculture sector that took place in 2002 identified three (3) main obstacles that stand in the way of agricultural products being successfully

commercialized: lack of infrastructure (roads, storage facilities, electricity); inefficient post-harvest handling and distribution; and a lack of information. Thus, as identified that, lack of information is among the main obstacles that stand in the way of agricultural products being successful. It is hope that, if agricultural information resources are well provided and farmers make well use of them, the imbalance of agricultural industry and farm production would be optimized in Kubau local government and Nigeria in general.

Review of related literature

According to International institute for communication and development (IICD 2002), Agricultural Information consulting is a dynamic, interactive process in which agricultural consultants are full partners with farmers, facilitating farming, storage, processing, and even marketing. The information consultant cultivates active partnerships with farmers, and providing relevant value-added information. Thus, Key elements of information literacy and scholarly information are integrated into the consulting relationship between farmers and agricultural consultants.

The driving forces behind the need for active and engaging information consulting in agricultural sector include: the growth of interdisciplinary research; changes in information-seeking behaviors and practices; the fact that information is no longer location dependent; and the changing nature of scholarly communication. Developments in information technology and the rapid pace of the information explosion are two main catalysts for changes in agricultural sector over the past two decades. Technologically driven changes have altered the nature of information services and experts-clients support. The volume of scientific information has been increasing dramatically, according to studies conducted by Derek Price, John Naisbitt, and Andrew Odlyzko (2010).

Nigeria is primarily an agriculture dependent country with 65% of the population as rural farmers Aina (2007). The provision of agricultural information and its usage by rural farmers is very important in the overall farm production optimization. This is particularly in the case of Kubau local government, as case study. The availability of information in different forms and formats enhanced almost all human endeavours in decision-making and problem-solving; and agriculture is no exception. To this point, availability of information in different forms and formats tend to enhance agricultural production optimization if well provided in Kubau local government area. Growth of agriculture is among the determinants of nation's development, as it contributes in the increment of per capital income of the citizenry, Opera (2010). Profitable farming requires

both satisfactory information consulting, prices, and more sales, Ani (1998). Yet, agricultural information consulting among farmers has been sparsely researched (Markman et al. 2005; Linan and Chen 20 09), determining a knowledge gap that needs to be filled, because it might be an additional lever to support farm production optimization. The alarm being advanced in this work is that, information if well provided and used, would help greatly in farm production optimization. Henceforth, it is risky to farm without reasonable information consulting from the experts.

Farmers in Kubau local government area are peasants who continue using traditional methods of farming with little adoption of newly innovated implements. Similarly, it is common practice by farmers in the state, using pesticides during farming practices every season and is increasing at rapid rate. Hence, information consulting services is less carried out in the area. Kaduna state is among nineteen (19) states in Northern Nigeria well known for its ability to grow variety of food stuffs for consumption and also for exportation abroad. Thus, farming is a great industry that provides citizenry with job opportunities. Farmers are the majority that formed the population of Kubau local government area of Kaduna state, mostly living in rural areas that two-third (2/3) of them are illiterates in term of western education (Nalado, 2019). He further explained that, Kaduna state is composed up of many tribes and unanimously able to communicate in Hausa language which happened to be the popular one among others. Kubau local government area is one of the twenty-three local governments in the state. It has a thriving agricultural sector, with crops such as maize, millet, sorghum, tomatoes, and sugarcane being grown in the surrounding farmland. It also has a number of industries, including traditional textile factories and food processing plants like Brown-sugar Cubes (named in Hausa Mazarkwaila or Rawan Doki).

Strengthen agricultural extension services is the best way to optimize farm production in kubau local government area. It could be achieved by providing farmers with an up-to-date information and best practices in general farming activities.

Research Questions

1. What Agricultural information for farm production optimization are provided to farmers in Kubau local government?
2. How does farmers make access to Agricultural information in Kubau local government?

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the Agricultural information for farm production optimization provided to farmers in Kubau local government.
2. To explore how farmers make access to Agricultural information services in Kubau local government.

Significant of the study

This study will be of optimal benefits in optimizing farm production not only in Kubau local government area, but also in Nigeria in general. It will further more increase awareness among farmers, on how to consult agricultural experts, and to have full access to the information/knowledge shared by agricultural experts. Agricultural experts too could design more strategies in reaching farmers with information resources available at their expertise.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research method. According to Musa (2013) qualitative research methodology refers to the method of inquiry employed to gather an in depth understanding of phenomenon and human behavior especially feelings, perceptions or opinions, and the reason that governs behavior.

Case study research design is seen to be best suited for this study. Thus, Kubau local government area of Kaduna state served as the case study in the research. According to Yin (2003) a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. Qualitative research methodology, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter; it attempts to make sense of, or, to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. Qualitative research is suitable for this study because it provides deeper understanding of human information behavior in social phenomena (Silverman, 2005).

Purposive sampling was adopted for the study. In purposive sampling, few participants are deliberately selected to reflect particular features of community within the population (Markwei 2013). This is because of the research objectives, population of interest, available resources, and practical constraints. In fact, it is an essential tool for obtaining reliable and valid research findings. Population of the study comprised of fifteen (15) participants for the study and were selected using purposive sampling methods in Kubau local government area of Kaduna state. Farmers were interviewed at farms and brief them about the objectives of the study. The respondents for this study were selected based on the following criteria: Must be a practicing farmer, and living within Kubau local government.

Method of Data Collection

The data required for achieving the objectives of this study were collected using in-depth interview. Thus, the interview was designed for collecting data on farmers' perceptions about pesticide labels information and reasons for non-use of pesticide labels information. Data collection is the process that enables the researcher to systematically gather relevant answers to research questions (Milanzi, 2009). Purposive method was used to select respondents for the study. Convenience purposive sampling is best suited for business studies, whereby stopping people on the street and asking questions is done. Hence, farmers were interviewed at farms and brief them about the objectives of the study. Using purposive sampling methods, fifteen (15) participants for the study were selected in Kaduna State Nigeria. Data were collected by the researchers. The data were transcribed for analysis

Method of Data Analysis

With the consent of the participants, interviews were audio taped and the records were transcribed verbatim using phenomenological analysis to explore and describe the lived experiences of individual respondents. According to Martin Heidegger (2007), phenomenological analysis is describing the existential aspects of human existence and the ways in which individuals relate to their world.

Based on the research questions, first respondent explained to have *"heard information regarding agricultural practices over Radio programmes"*. Second respondent said, *"I occasionally listen to the radio program on agriculture when chanced, because it does not give avenue for questions and answers"*. Third respondent gave his experience as, *"only relied on his colleagues at farms for any agricultural information"*. Fourth respondent mentioned that, *"I solely relied on radio programmes for agricultural information because I used to get benefits from experts' advice"*. Fifth respondent had given reason for not having access to agricultural information because, *he depends on his experiences"*. The sixth respondent said, *"I used to hear advice from experts on agricultural information, but prepared to go for my own way"*. Seventh respondent narrated that, *"for long time ago, agricultural extension workers does visit rural farmers for agricultural awareness campaigns. But cease to continue uninformed"*. The number eight respondent expressed his mind saying, *"I don't have time for any agricultural information because researches are published in English not in Hausa"*. Ninth respondent was recorded saying, *"I prefer having agricultural information on video projection"*. The tenth respondent said, *"I solely depend on my peer-farmers as sources for agricultural information"*. Eleventh respondent explained that, *"farmers in the rural areas normal get first-hand information about agricultural practices on radio programmes, had it means they could get an on-the-site agricultural information services"*

at their farmers from the experts, farm produce would be optimized". The number twelve respondent have said, *"we (farmers) only depend on radio to have access to agricultural information"*. The number thirteen respondent explained his view as, *"majority of farmers does not have access to abundant research results in higher institutions, thereby relied upon radio programmes for agricultural information"*. Number fourteen respondent said, *"agricultural information is normally airs on radio, and I don't have time for listening to radio at farm"*. The number fifteen respondent have mentioned that, *"I prefer seeing video clips on agricultural information for better understanding"*.

Above are the interview transcriptions as sourced from the fifteen (15) respondents who keenly participated in the study.

Discussion of the findings

From the research findings, it was discovered that, (i) radio programme concerning agricultural information provision is being airing. According to Markman et al. (2005); Linan and Chen (20 09), this might target many audiences, but does not provide avenue for making questions and answers. Farmers are only opportune to hear a program on radio, but cannot ask for any clarification and more explanation about uncleared issues. (ii) violation of information being provided due to free attitudes by some farmers who knew the messages/information provided. According to international institute for communication and development (IICD 2002) at most, farmer prepare taking suggestion from their peer-farmers, or stand by what they observed been practice in their community locally. (iii) lack of continuity of the services of agricultural extension workers. Nalado, (2019) stressed that, discontinuity of services (that is seasonal in nature) drive the attention of most farmers to neglect what is being shared by agricultural experts. (iv) farmers are only accessing agricultural information through radio programs. Nalado, (2019) pinpointed that, on-the-site services at farms does not been offered by agricultural experts. (v) absence of other sources of information minimized farm production optimization. Zhang (2018) stressed that, agricultural universities and research institutions conducted and published research studies for stakeholders to consume in the industry, but majority of farmers are not aware of such research studies.

Conclusion

The study was conducted investigating agricultural information consulting for farm production optimization, with a case study of Kubau local government area of Kaduna state. Purposive method was used to select respondents for the study. Qualitative research method was adopted and an in-depth interview was used for

gathering data. Data were analysed using phenomenological method. The study revealed that, radio programme concerning agricultural information provision is being airing. Farmers are only accessing agricultural information through radio programs. On-the-site services at farms does not been offered by agricultural experts. Absence of other sources of information minimized farm production optimization.

Recommendations

Agricultural forums and online communities' platforms can be established where farmers and agricultural professionals can connect, share information, and seek advice whenever necessary. Agricultural publications and magazines can be translated into slate-projector films. This could help gears farm practices towards farm production optimization and insights. Government agricultural agencies should provide farmers with help lines in that, farmers can instantly at farms reach them with their questions at hand, for an assistance. Agricultural workshops and events could be of great advantage to farmers, where they can have access to agricultural information. This can enable farmers to interact with experts in the field to learn more and to exchange ideas. Hence, its importance for farmers to stay connected with experts to ensure they are aware of the available agricultural information services and resources.

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