

## PERCEPTION OF FARMERS ON AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE DELIVERY IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA.

**\*Omale, A.E., \*\*Adah, O.C. & \*Akor, J.A.**

\*Kogi State College of Education,  
P.M.B. 1033, Ankpa, Nigeria.

\*\*Department of Agricultural Economics & Extension,  
Kogi State University,  
P.M.B. 1008, Anyigba, Nigeria.

Corresponding Author's e-mail: [adahchris224@yahoo.com](mailto:adahchris224@yahoo.com) 08138676000.

### Abstract

The study analyzed the perception of farmers on the agricultural extension service delivery in Kogi State, Nigeria. Using multistage sampling procedure, a sample of 120 contact farmers was selected for the study. Data for the study were collected using well-structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis. Results show that the contact farmers perceived that the extension service rendered were not always tailored to farmers' needs ( $\bar{x}=2.80$ ), among others. Also, inadequate number of extension agents ( $\bar{x}=2.72$ ) and equipment/teaching materials for effective job performance ( $\bar{x}=2.61$ ) were major constraints to extension service delivery. It was therefore recommended, among others, that adequate number of extension staff should be employed by government for efficient agricultural extension service delivery.

**Keywords:** Farmers, Perception, Extension, Service Delivery.

### Introduction

Agriculture is a key sector in the economy of Nigeria. It's contribution to the overall development especially in Nigeria includes; provision of increased food supplies, provision of gainful employment, provision of capital and capital formation, release of labour for industrial development and increasing rural welfare (Orebiyi *et al.*, 2012). As observed by

Akinagbe *et al.* (2014), today's understanding of extension goes beyond technology transfer to facilitation; beyond training to learning and includes assisting farmers to form groups, dealing with marketing issues and partnering with a broad range of service providers and other agencies. This is where efficient agricultural extension delivery becomes germane. Hence, Ani (2007) pointed out that the concern of extension process is to help farmers make a decent living-to master the best way to handle their farms in order to improve their standard of living.

Nigeria is blessed with several agricultural research and extension systems and linkages including commodity based research institutes, specialized agricultural extension institutes and universities, colleges of agriculture and yet it is categorized a food-deficit or food insecure nation (Akinagbe *et al.*,2014).With all these sumptuous extension endowments the nation is supposedly placed to be sustainably food secure.

Akagwu, Omale and Sani (2014) viewed agricultural extension as the transfer of agricultural technologies to rural farmers for application or adoption to improve their farm productivity and standard of living. Further to this, it involves the conscious provision of educational instruction or technical information for use by the farmers in taking actions to manage their farms effectively for increased productivity and improved standard of living. According to Mondal (2016), agricultural extension is the education which helps in extending the scientific knowledge of agriculture to the farming community for enhancing production, processing, and marketing for higher income of the farming community. It also includes value addition to agricultural produce with the application of latest technology.

From the foregoing and for the realization of the laudable role of technology transfer by extension, its services delivery via training of farmers is very crucial. Farmers' use or adoption of findings from research institutes require effective training by extension agents. Ladele *et al.* (2008)pointed out that the goal of all extension work is to change the outlook of the clientele towards their problems. Changes normally expected are in their knowledge, skills and attitudes. Usually for learning to be most effective and for adoption to be rapid such exercise should be hitch free. Unfortunately, effective extension service delivery has often been constrained by a number of factors (Agbarevo and Obinne, 2010 and Madukwe, 2011). Notable among them include poor research-extension-farmer linkage, dearth of extension personnel, poor financial and logistic support for extension service, poor input delivery system, inadequate extension contacts and unfavourable attitude on the part of staff. Orebiyi

*et al.* (2012) also identified insufficient extension and inadequate extension visits to the resource poor farmers as the critical factor responsible for the declining trend in agricultural production.

Perception is believed to be an out-growth of sensation (Okau and Okiri, 2003). According to Ekoja (2002), perception is the process by which sensory information from the environment are organized interpreted. Perception is generally considered as an organized, unified experience that can arise from several sensory processes. In a nutshell, perception is the process by which an individual gives meaning to the environment which involves organizing interpreting various stimuli into a psychological experience (Adereti and Ajayi, 2011). People see the world around them in their own unique way and respond behaviorally according to their interpretation.

Perception is the process by which information or stimuli from our environment are received and transformed into psychological awareness (Atkinson *et al.*, 2003). Hence, Oladeji (2002) gave the following reasons why perception in extension educational process is important:

- i) Farmers and extension workers have to perceive if they are to learn. What they learn and how they learn is a function of their perception.
- ii) Perception furnishes individual with experiences that promote thinking and understanding.
- iii) Perception helps individual in problem-solving.
- iv) Perception is indispensable in the development of memory and imagination.
- v) Perception builds up individuals' emotion.

The complexity associated with the psychology of human perception is difficult for extension agents to comprehend, but they could appreciate why and how people interpret their surroundings differently. From the knowledge of perception, the extension agents are well equipped to plan and use the various extension methodologies. To guide the study, the following research questions have been formulated:

- i) What is the perception of farmers on agricultural extension service delivery in Kogi State?
- ii) What are the farmers perceived constraints to extension service delivery in the study area?

Therefore, the study was designed to:

- i) determine perception of farmers on agricultural extension service delivery in Kogi State, Nigeria; and
- ii) identify constraints to extension service delivery in the study area.

### **Methodology**

The study was carried out in Kogi State, North Central Nigeria. It is the most centrally located of all the states of the Federation. Kogi State has a total land area of 28,312.64km<sup>2</sup> which lies between longitudes 5° 18 E to 7° 54 E and 6° 30 N to 8° 42 N. Its annual rainfall ranges between 1016mm in the driest parts of the state to 1524mm in the wettest parts (Kogi State Agricultural Development Project, 1993). It shares common boundaries with Niger, Nassarawa States and the Federal Capital Territory to the North and Benue State to the East. To the West, it is bounded by Kwara, Ekiti and Ondo States and to the South by Enugu, Anambra and Edo states.

There are two distinct weather seasons in the state-dry and wet seasons. The wet season starts from about the end of March and ends towards the end of October. The two most important rivers are Rivers Niger and Benue which form a confluence at Lokoja. Their numerous tributaries traverse across the length and breadth of the state.

The farmland ranges from undulating hills and valleys in the western side to the plain lands in the eastern part of the state. Areas along the major rivers and their tributaries are riverine and sandy; which give room for fadama agriculture. Wide varieties of food and cash crops are grown in the state including oil palm. Livestock rearing and fish farming/fishing are also practiced in the state.

Kogi State is made up of twenty-one (21) Local Government Areas, divided into four (4) agricultural zones by Kogi State Agricultural Development Project (KADP). The zones and their headquarters are: Zone A (AyetoroGbede) Zone B (Anyigba), Zone C (KotonKarfe) and Zone D (Alloma). The people in the study area are predominantly practicing subsistence farmers.

The study population consisted of all the contact/lead crop farmers in the four agricultural zones of the state. Three (3) agricultural zones were purposively selected for the study. Using multistage sampling procedure, 120 contact farmers (respondents) were selected for the study. In stage one, 2 extension blocks were selected from each zone, making it a total of 6 blocks. In stage two, 2 cells were selected from each of the 6 blocks making it a total of 12 cells. In stage three, 10 contact farmers were selected from each of the 12 cells, making it a

total of 120 contact farmers.

Data for the study were collected using well-structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to analyze data collected for the study.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Perception of farmers on agricultural extension service delivery**

Results in Table 1 show perception of farmers on agricultural extension service delivery which includes extension services rendered are not always tailored to farmers' needs ( $\bar{x}=2.80$ ), extension agents do not care about farmers' problems on the farm ( $\bar{x}=2.72$ ). Though contact farmers in the study area like to utilize information obtained from extension agents ( $\bar{x}=2.65$ ), the extension agents do not give timely information on production ( $\bar{x}=2.65$ ). Most farmers ( $\bar{x}=2.55$ ) perceived that extension agents do not have good human relations, while some few farmers ( $\bar{x}=2.00$ ) disagreed being treated as inferior by the agents. More than half ( $\bar{x}=2.52$ ) of the respondents perceived that the extension agents do not have regard for the indigenous knowledge of farming.

On the contrary, few farmers ( $\bar{x}=2.14$ ) perceived that the knowledge gained from extension services help to improve farmers' production. Similarly, some other few farmers ( $\bar{x}=2.24$ ) perceived that yields got from the use of information from extension agents are encouraging. The analysis of the contact farmers' perceptions on agricultural extension service delivery clearly implied some level of less effectiveness in extension delivery.

**Table 1: Perception of the Farmers on Agricultural Extension Service Delivery**

Variable	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Knowledge gained from extension services has helped improve farmers' production	2.14	.63
Extension service rendered are not always tailored to farmers' needs.	2.80	.66
Yields got from the use of information from extension agents are usually encouraging	2.24	.69
Extension agents do not have regard for the indigenous knowledge of farming	2.52	.98
Extension services rendered are okay	2.30	.82
Extension agents are usually friendly in disseminating information	1.73	1.3
Extension agents do all the talking without listening to farmers' problems	2.35	.88
Information got from extension agents are always very clear	2.38	.83
Extension services rendered are not always reliable	2.34	.84
I always like to utilize information obtained from extension agent	2.65	.95
Extension agents do not give timely information on production	2.65	.95
Extension agents are usually democratic in decision making on the farm with us.	2.38	.99
Extension agents do not care about farmers' problems on the farm.	2.72	.86
Extension services rendered always meet farmers' needs	2.12	.69
Extension agents do not have good human relations	2.55	.97
Extension agents treat farmers as inferior people	2.00	.74
Extension agents always motivate/encourage farmers' desire to learn	2.26	.86

The findings from this study is contrary to the general goal of extension which according to Ladele *et al.* (2008) is to enable people use scientific and technological information to improve their quality of life. In consonance with this, Agbarevo and Obinne (2010) pointed out that agricultural extension education is an informal or out-of-school educational programme for adult learners, rural people or farmers designed to help them and their families learn, accept and adopt improved agricultural practices. Anything short of or

contrary to the foregoing, translates to less effectiveness.

### **Constraints to extension service delivery**

Results in Table 2 show the constraints to extension service delivery which includes inadequate number of extension agents ( $\bar{x}$ =2.72) and inadequate equipment and teaching materials for effective job performance ( $\bar{x}$ =2.61). Other constraints such as inadequate transport for extension staff ( $\bar{x}$ =2.17), language barrier ( $\bar{x}$ =1.38), and poor remuneration for extension staff ( $\bar{x}$ =1.30), among others were looked at as not severe constraints. These findings are in agreement with that of Ladele *et al.* (2008), Agbarevo *et al.* (2010) and Agbamu (2011) who reported poor logistic support for field staff, use of poorly trained personnel at the local level, disproportionate extension agent to farm family ratio, poor motivation of extension staff, top-down approach, among others as constraints to extension

**Table 2: Constraints to Extension Service Delivery**

Variables	Mean	Standard
	Score	Deviation
Inadequate transport (mobility) of extension staff	2.17	.20
Poor salary package for extension staff	1.30	1.69
Inadequate extension training on the job	1.38	.57
Poor out of station allowance for extension staff	1.83	.69
Inadequate equipment/teaching materials for effective job performance	2.61	.64
Inadequate number of extension agents	2.72	.55
Lack of interest in the job by extension staff	2.17	.56
Language barrier	1.38	.64
Lack of sustainability of efforts as a result of frequent transfers of agents	1.26	.51

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The farmers in the study area perceived that agricultural extension service delivery was short of high expectations on their part. Constraints such as inadequate mobility of extension staff, inadequate equipment/teaching materials for effective job performance,

inadequate number of extension agents, among others were identified. Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations were made:

- i) Enough or adequate materials for extension duties should be provided by government or donor agencies for effective service delivery.
- ii) Inadequate number or shortage of extension staff should be urgently addressed by government to cope with the increasing number of farmers.
- iii) Transportation problem of the extension staff should be properly addressed by government, since it is an important factor in operating an efficient agricultural extension service. Adequate operational vehicles should be procured by government for this purpose.
- iv) Government should put in place, special incentive scheme for extension staff to ensure their increased commitment to duty.

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