

Awareness and Preferred Sources of Information on Improved Farm Practices by Small Scale Cassava Farmers in Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State

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ABSTRACT

The performance of Nigerian agriculture so far indicates that the farmers have neither used nor adopted most of the technologies being introduced to them however, effort is being made by Nigerian policy makers, her development partners, and experts in Nigerian agriculture that the situation changes. This study assessed the awareness and preferred sources of information on improved farm practices by small scale cassava farmers in Ovia North East Local Government Area, in Edo State. Specifically, it assessed the level of awareness, sources / channels of information, and preferred channels. Simple random and purposive sampling was used in this study to select five communities because of their high cassava cultivation. Primary and secondary data were collected for this study through a well structured questionnaire, interview schedule, journals and books. Finding from the study revealed that the most preferred channel of information was the Television, with mean = 3.4700 and the least preferred, was the poster with mean=1.0900. It was recommended that the Government, Extension agents and private organizations should make efforts to ensure that information on improved farm practices reach them.

Keywords: Awareness, preferred, information, farm practices, cassava.

INTRODUCTION

There is a consensus among Nigerian policy makers, her development partners, and experts in Nigerian agriculture that the wealth of the country can substantially be derived from agricultural production and small scale farmers to a large extent, hold the key to the realization of this possibility (Opara, 2010). However, the average Nigerian small farmer is poor, non-literate, unaware, and lacks access to most basic social amenities, as well as improved varieties of inputs and modern farming implements. The consequence of these has been low production and productivity (Olawunmi, 2007).

According to Omonoma (2009), the Nigerian cassava system, characterized by small-scale farmers cultivating less than 2 hectares of cassava, is subsistence in nature, primarily cultivated for the traditional food market, and not oriented to the industrial market. Mere provision of agricultural information to farmers does not guarantee its use (Opara, 2010). Information uses is dependent on the capacity of the users to access information and later utilize

them. It also includes the appropriateness of the information, the credibility of the information channel, and the information provider's characteristics. According to Agbarevo and Obinne (2010), the use of inappropriate media is a serious barrier to effective communication of an innovation in agriculture. The application of unsuitable media in terms of language, culture, technical and content renders the message worthless. African countries have not devoted adequate attention to providing their citizens with access to information especially in rural areas, where 70-80% of the African population reside (Achugbue and Anie, 2011). The performance of Nigerian agriculture so far indicates that the farmers have neither used nor adopted most of the technologies being introduced to them (Atande, 1999).

In view of the above therefore, the study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

- Are the small scale cassava farmers aware of the improved farm practices provide by various sources in the study area?

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- Through what sources and channels are those improved practices disseminated to small scale farmers in the study area?
- Which of these channels do the respondents prefer?

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to assess the awareness and preferred sources of information on improved farm practices by small scale cassava farmers in Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State.

The specific objectives are to:

- ascertain the level of awareness of small scale cassava farmers on the available improved farm practices in the study area;
- identify the sources through which small scale cassava farmers receive information on improved farm practices in the study area;
- Identify the preferred channels of information by small scale cassava farmers in the study area, and

METHODOLOGY

The area for this study is Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State Nigeria. It has its head quarters in Okada. It has an area of 2301 km square and the population of 153,849 at the 2006 census. Purposive sampling was used to select these five communities in Ovia North East Local Government as a result of their high production of cassava. 20 respondents were drawn randomly from each of these communities summing up to 100 respondents. Primary data was collected for this study through a well structured questionnaire and the interview schedule as well as secondary sources such as textbooks, journals, agricultural bulletins among others.

Measurement of Variables

Objective One

The awareness of improved farm practices was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequency distribution, and mean. A two point rating scale scored as 1– aware, 2- not aware, was used to determine the awareness of improved farm practices.

Objective Two

Sources of information received from the respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequency

distribution, and mean. A two point rating scale anchored as 1-received, 2-Not received was used to determine the sources through which respondents received information.

Objective Three

The preferred information channels of respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequency distribution, and mean. A four point rating scale scored as 4-most preferred, 3- preferred, 2- least preferred, 1- not preferred was used to measure the preferred information channel used by respondents. A mean score of 2.5 and above will be taken to mean that the respondents prefer a particular information channel.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Awareness of Small Scale Cassava Farms on Available Improved Farm Practices

The result from Table 1 shows that the respondents are aware of some of these improved practices and technologies even though they were not directly disseminated to them.

The result from Table 1 shows that under production; 71% of the respondents were aware of improved varieties, 85% were aware of the spacing (1m x 1m), 81% were aware of the cutting length (25cm or 15-30cm), 91% of the respondents were aware of intercropping with cassava, 84% were aware of the use of herbicides, 73% were aware of the use of fertilizer, 58% are aware of the use of insecticide application, 57% are aware of the use of irrigation.

The level of awareness under processing as shown in the result includes; 53% of the respondent were aware of the use of washer in processing, 61% were aware of the use of Grater in processing, 54% were aware of the use of Dryer, 43% were aware of the use of chipping machine, 50% were aware of packaging of Agricultural product. Information from the Table also shows that 79% of the respondents were aware of the processing of cassava in flour, 92% were aware of the processing of cassava into gari, 72% were aware of the processing of cassava into chips, 96% of the respondents were aware of the processing of cassava into starch and 93% were aware of processing cassava into odourless fufu. Under the storage of cassava products, 54 of the farmers were aware of the storage of cassava product in the freezer, 54

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were aware of storage in to refrigeration and 55% were aware of storage in plastic bags, sprayed with fungicides.

Under marketing of Agricultural, products, only 1% of the respondents were aware of a guaranteed minimum price on fresh cassava product, none of the respondents were aware of a guaranteed minimum price on dried and enriched form of cassava products. All the

respondents were aware of bulk sales of fresh tubers of cassava products and processed products. The main problem of agricultural development in Nigeria is not the lack of technologies and scientific findings needed for economic and social change, but inadequate information on the usage of the improve technologies(Omokhaye, 2000).

Table1. Awareness of small scale cassava farms on available improved farm practices

		Aware		Not Aware	
	Practices/Technologies/ Information	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
A	PRODUCTION				
1	Improved varieties	71	71.0	29	29.0
2	Spacing (1m x 1m)	85	85.0	15	15.0
3	Cutting lengths, 25cm, or 15-30cm	81	81.0	19	19.0
4	Intercropping	91	91.0	9	9.0
5	Use of herbicide	84	84.0	16	16.0
6	Fertilizer application	73	73.0	27	27.0
7	Insecticide application	58	58.0	42	42.0
8	Use of irrigation	57	57.0	43	43.0
B	PROCESSING				
	Use of mechanized labour which involves these implement such as				
i	Washer	53	53.0	47	47.0
ii	Grater	61	61.0	39	39.0
iii	Dryer	54	54.0	46	46.0
iv	Chipping machine	43	43.0	57	57.0
v	Packaging	50	50.0	50	50.0
	Processing of cassava into				
i	Flour	79	79.0	21	21.0
ii	Garri	92	92.0	8	8.0
iii	Chip	72	72.0	28	28.0
iv	Starch	96	96.0	8	8.0
v	Odourless fufu	93	93.0	7	7.0
C	STORAGE				
	Storing in				
ii	Freezer	54	54.0	46	46.0
iii	Refrigerator	51	51.0	49	49.0
iv	Plastic bags, sprayed with fungicide	55	55.0	45	45.0
D	MARKETING				
	Knowledge of guaranteed minimum price on cassava products in				
i	Fresh form	1	1.0	99	99.0
ii	Dried form	0	0.0	100	100.0
iii	Enrich form	0	0.0	100	100.0
	Sell mainly in bulk for				
v	Fresh tubers	100	100.0	0	0.0
vi	Processed products	100	100.0	0	0.0

Source: Field Study Data 2015

Sources through which Information was Received

The result from Table 2 shows that no information was received from Universities, Non-Government Organization (NGO)

International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) or extension agent. 98% of the information received by the respondent (100%) received information from personal experience gotten over the years of farming and all the

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respondents (100%) also received information from their fellow farmers.

Lwoga *et al.* (2011) stressed that Interpersonal sources such as friends, family members and

neighbours are all the time become the main providers of the agriculture information due to their credibility, reliability and most of all, they are trusted by the rural community.

Table 2 Sources through which information was received

	Information Source	Received		Not Received	
		Mean	Percent	Mean	Percent
1	Universities	0	0.0	100	100.0
2	Non Governmental organization (NGO)	0	0.0	100	100.0
3	Agricultural Development project (ADP)	0	0.0	100	100.0
4	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture	0	0.0	100	100.0
5	Family and Friends	98	98.0	2	2.0
6	Fellow Farmers	100	100.0	0	0.0
7	Personal Experience	100	100	0	0.0
8	Extension Agents	0	0.0	100	100

Source: Field Study Data 2015

Information Channels used by Small Scale Cassava Farmers

The result from Table 3 shows that 89% of the respondent listen to radio, 91% use television 84% use friends/neighbours, 29% use home/farm visit, 66% use sales agents, 2% use farmers association, 3% use local drivers, 3% use group discussion, 3% use newspaper, 1% use campaign/exhibition, 1% use workshop, 17% use GSM/telephone, 1% use pamphlets, 1% use bulletins, 10% use lectures, 6% use internet and 1% use extension Agents.

The result from the Table 3 also shows that large proportion of the respondents use radio

(89%) television (91%) friends/ Neighbours (84%) and sales agents (66%) as these channels do not need any special skill or knowledge to use them and the illiterate and literate respondents have easy access to them while others that are not readily available and require provision by government research institute and extension agents like workshops (1%), campaign/exhibition (1%) farmers association (2%) are not usually used because of the unavailability of extension agent, and lack of government intervention. Adhiguru *et al.* (2009) found that small and marginal farmers accessed less information and from fewer sources than medium and large Scale farmers.

Table 3. Information channels used by small scale cassava farmers

Channel	Used		Not Used	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Radio	89	89.0	16	16.0
Television	91	91.0	9	9.0
Friends/neighbours	84	84.0	16	16.0
Home/farm visits	29	29.0	71	71.0
Sales agents	66	66.0	34	34.0
farmers association	2	2.0	98	98.0
Local drivers	3	3.0	97	97.0
Group discussion	3	3.0	97	97.0
Newspaper	3	3.0	97	97.0
Campaign/exhibition	1	1.0	99	99.0
Posters	1	1.0	99	99.0
Workshop	1	1.0	99	99.0
GSM/Telephone	17	17.0	83	83.0
Pamphlets	1	1.0	99	99.0
Bulletins	1	1.0	99	99.0
Lectures	10	10.0	90	90.0
Internet	6	6.0	94	94.0
Extension Agents	1	1.0	99	99.0

Source: Field Study Data 2015

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Preferred Channel of Information

The result from Table 4 shows the preferred channel of information used by respondent. According to their level of preference television was the most preferred with mean = 3.4700 and standard deviation = 0.86987 and posters as the

least preferred with mean = 1.0900 and standard deviation = 0.35090. Television (mean=3.4700), Radio (mean=3.2400), Friends/ neighbours (mean=2.6700), and Sales agent(mean=2.6300) were generally preferred by the respondents.

Table4. Preferred channel of information

Channels	Mean	Std. Deviation
Television	3.4700	.86987
Radio	3.2400	1.01623
Friends/neighbours	2.6700	.87681
Sales agents	2.6300	1.24442
Home/farm visits	1.9300	.98734
Lectures	1.6000	4.30175
GSM/Telephone	1.4800	.94794
Internet	1.2200	.62893
farmers association	1.1800	.45793
Local drivers	1.1700	.47258
Pamphlets	1.1400	.40252
Campaign/exhibition	1.1400	.44992
Newspaper	1.1400	.40252
Group discussion	1.1300	.39325
Extension Agents	1.1000	.36237
Workshop	1.1000	.36237
Bulletins	1.1000	.36237
Posters	1.0900	.35090

Source: Field Study Data 2015, Preferred channel (Mean=2.5).

CONCLUSION

The result from this research work shows that most of the small scale cassava farmers in Ovia North East local Government Area were aware of some of the improved farm practices in cassava production. This awareness was derived from family and friends, from fellow farmers, and from personal experience. No information was disseminated through Extension Agents, Government, Non Governmental Organizations(NGO), Research institutes like- International Institute Of Tropical Agriculture(IITA), and Agricultural Development Project(ADP).

The preferred channel of information through which most small scale farmers in Ovia North East Local Government Area receive their information is through Television, Radio, Friends and neighbour, and Sales Agent respectively, according to the order of preference.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Extension agent linkage with small scale farmers in Ovia North East local Government Area should be established so as to facilitate

the spread of information on improved farm and management practices to farmers.

2. Media owners should broadcast more agricultural information programmes on both radio and television and should make sure that the programmes are broadcast at appropriate and convenient times for farmer.
3. Rural electrification should be supported by the government so that modern agricultural information services/facilitates can available and used in these areas.

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