

GENDER AND INFORMATION NEEDS, SOURCES, PROBLEMS FACED IN THE USE OF AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION BY COOPERATIVE FARMERS IN UKWUANI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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The study investigated Gender and information needs, sources, problems faced in the use of agricultural information by Cooperative Farmers in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State. The study examined the information needs, information sources and also to ascertain the problems that militate against cooperative farmers while using agricultural information. To guide the study, three research questions were raised. Descriptive survey design was adopted and questionnaire was the research instrument that was used in obtaining data. The population of the study is 218 cooperative farmers (both male and female) in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State. The study revealed that. Both sexes agreed that they need agricultural information on pests and disease control; improve method of farming, how to obtain credit /loan facilities and where to store and sell their produce. Result also shows that both sexes agreed that personal experience, Neighbours / Friends, and Cooperative society are some of their major sources of agricultural information. The major problems faced by both sexes of cooperative farmers in the use of agricultural information are erratic power supply, untimely information, lack of visitation by agricultural extension officer, no nearby library, lack of computer knowledge and access to agricultural databases and lack of agricultural information in my native. Based on the findings, the following recommendation was made: Government, information officers, agricultural extension workers and other relevant bodies should ensure that cooperative and other rural farmers are provided with accurate and timely agricultural information. The study concludes that agricultural information is of utmost important to cooperative farmers of both sexes in order to increase productivity.

Key words: Agricultural information, Cooperative farmers, Gender, Information sources, Information Needs.

INTRODUCTION

Gender issues have become one of the most sensitive issues in the world today (Oni, 2009). Today, we hear and talk about gender equality, emancipation and liberation in almost every facets or spheres of human endeavour. Gender issues especially women participating in the developmental process has become prominent in the literature, democracy and governance. This is due to the establishment of Women in Agriculture (WIA) as a component of Agricultural Development programme (ADP) (Ogunniyi, Alao&Adeleke, 2012). Gender describes the socially determined attribute of men and women. It refers to the physical and biological difference between men and women. Gender is a useful socioeconomic variable to analyze roles, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and incentives of people involved in agriculture (Mafimisebi, 2007). Gender differential is the description in character of being male or female as ascribed by culture and society. The term gender does not only connote sex, it is culturally ascribed as a role performed by either of the sexes. (Ogunniyi, Ajao&Adeleke, 2012). The issue of gender is a process by which individuals are born into biological categories of female and male. This could become the social categories of women and men through the acquisition of locally defined attributes of femininity and masculinity (Aina, 2002). Gender deals with the social relationship between men and women and how these relationships are negotiated in the production of goods and services (Ironkwe, 2011).

Farmers' personal characteristic and socio-economic status, which are determined by gender, constitute critical factors in information utilization process (Chukwu, 2007). The 'information highway' is still predominantly male-oriented and often a forum for gender discrimination and intimidation (Huyer, 1997).

Several studies on gender revealed that male farmers in general utilizes sources like fellow farmers, friends, pesticide

dealers and extension farmers as well as their access to agricultural technologies (Rahman, 2005). It is pertinent to note that the dream of rural development cannot be realized until both male and female rural dwellers earn profit from these sources and relevant information. Female crop farmers' experienced greater problems in accessing agricultural information (Adomi, Ogbomo&Inoni, 2003). Studies reported that audio visual aids, radio and TV were the main sources of information to both sexes. However, a lesser number of male farmers utilized grey matter (Nazam, 2000; Cheema, 2000; Barkat, 2002). All the extension activities were directed only towards the male farmers and not a single institute present to provide knowledge and training about the various aspects of agriculture and home management, which totally corner the women in dissemination of desired information. They were unable to get benefit from any major source of information, however, they shared any type of information with their female relatives or a negligible number may share with their husbands. In these hostile conditions how it is possible to gear up the process of development by neglecting half of the population of the country (Nosheen& Ahmad, 2010). The study conducted by Nosheen& Ahmad (2010) posited that the respondents were asked their sources of information about day to day developments in the areas of crop, livestock and household management. For females, television followed by friends, relatives, radio and local farmers were their most frequently used sources of information. For males, the most frequent sources of information were local farmers and relatives followed by friends, television and radio. Sources of information, like inputs/output dealers, books/booklets and extension workers were the least frequent sources of information for both the males and female in the study area. In Africa, the radio plays a major role in delivering agricultural messages. The radio is one of the main sources of information for rural female farmers; in a study carried out in Kenya, it was indicated that 80% of the population that owned radio were male/ However, the female percentage of listeners to radio information were higher than the male (Morgan, 1993). Munyua (2000) further asserted that radio, audiovisuals, print technology, etc, would also be of great help to female farmers in this information age.

Tshabalala (2001) noted that information is a powerful tool in addressing agricultural needs and if it is used appropriately, it can radically change a nation's economy. Information could play a valuable role in helping to solve these problems. One of the main reasons for this low level of achievement by cooperative farmers is the lack of adequate information centres, which promote speedy dissemination of information (Verma, 1988). Access to the various channels of information dissemination adopted by the various organizations are blurred to co-operative farmers and they do not utilize the acquired knowledge in farming practices in order to achieve the set aims and objectives. According to Low (2000), information is a means of transferring events for better awareness to add new meaning that could change events, lives, or experiences, awareness and use of information produce knowledge. The ever increasing information explosion on agricultural produce: Seedling, harvesting, marketing and storage among others may have considerable implications on farmers, implementation of farm tools and the extension services, (Oto, 2011). The agricultural sector is the backbone of many economies in Africa.

The agricultural sector in developing countries is becoming increasingly knowledge intensive. Researchers at the global, regional, and national levels continue to generate new information. As agriculture systems become more complex, farmers' access to reliable, timely, and relevant information sources becomes more critical to their competitiveness. Information must be relevant and meaningful to farmers, in addition to being packaged and delivered in a way preferred by them (Diekmann, Loibl, &Batte, 2009). The advancements in the information and communication technologies (ICTs) provide an opportunity for developing countries to harness and utilize information and knowledge to improve productivity in various sectors including agriculture (Lwoga, 2010). Unfortunately, poor farmers are mainly affected by the digital divide which is a gap between groups or individuals in their ability to use ICTs effectively due to differing literacy, technical skills, and useful digital content (Ghatak, 2007). Nevertheless, the emergence of low cost ICTs (such as radio, cell phones, and the media provided by the telecenters) may bridge the digital divide (Lwoga&Ngulube, 2008).

However, most African countries have not devoted their efforts to the dissemination of knowledge and information, especially in rural areas, where 70 to 80 percent of the African population lives (Adomi, Ogbomo&Inoni, 2003). Tire (2006) posits that only a small amount of agricultural information is accessible to rural farmers, despite the large body of knowledge that exists in research institutions, universities, public offices and libraries. This situation is largely attributed to the weak linkages between research, extension, not for profit organizations, libraries and farmers and thus these technologies have neither reached nor been adopted by their intended beneficiaries to improve their farming activities in developing countries including (Tire, 2006). Adomi, Ogbomo&Inoni (2003) stated that one of the most serious constraints confronting agricultural development is limited access to agricultural information by cooperative farmers. Oluwadare&Okunlola(2006) pointed out that Nigeria's economy is rural-based, with over 70% of the population deriving their means of livelihood from agriculture either directly or indirectly and further stated that these rural areas are still starved of most modern facilities such as potable water, electricity, good roads, decent housing, educational facilities, modern health facilities, storage facilities and most especially communication facilities. However, a lot have been done with regards to information seeking behaviour of rural farmers but much has not been written with respect to gender and information needs, sources, and problems in the use of agricultural information by Cooperative Farmers. Hence, this study will fill this gap.

Statement of the problem

Agriculture constitutes a very important component of the economy of Delta State, Nigeria and Africa at large. Adomi, Ogbomo&Inoni (2003) stated that agriculture provides the major source of revenue/livelihood for more than 70 percent

of the population in Delta State. The majority of the farmers dwell in rural areas and most of them are crop farmers who practice subsistence farming. Rural population is usually characterized by limited conventional energy sources, lack of infrastructure, low level of economic activity and long distance external markets (Griddings & Underworld, 2007). Information is sacrosanct to agricultural development of any nation. The role of information in most of our activities in the world today especially where it is aimed at influencing the farming practices of rural farmers cannot be downplayed. Ballantyne (2005) observes that information for agricultural and rural communities is therefore a crucial tool in the fight against poverty and the battle to achieve food security. The exchange of information and knowledge within the agricultural sector are a key component in improving small-scale agricultural production and linking increased production to remunerative markets, thus leading to improved rural livelihoods, improving quality and yield, food security and national economies (Asaba, Musebe, Kimani, Day, Nkonu, Mukhebi, Wesonga, Mbula, Balaba, & Nakagwa, 2006). Is there any gender difference in the information needs, sources and problems in use of agricultural information of cooperative farmers?

It against this background, this study attempts to investigate Gender and Information Needs, Sources, Problems in the use of Agricultural information by Cooperative Farmers in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State.

Objectives of the study

To find out the agricultural information needs of cooperative farmers in Ukwuani local government area.

To identify the information sources/channels consulted by cooperative farmers in meeting their agricultural information needs.

To discover factors which act as impediments to cooperative farmers' efforts in the use of agricultural information?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Agricultural Information Needs of Cooperative Farmers

All established organizations have a particular reason or objective why they are formed; hence they would like to fulfil that objective and attain that goal. One of the most important things they search for to attain this goal is information. Information needs as a means improving existing services or creating new agencies to cope with all the information needs which are not been satisfied. Adomi, Ogbomo & Inoni (2003) noted that farmers need to have access to agricultural information if their agricultural efforts are to succeed. They went further to assert that farmers need access to the experiences of others in similar situations (Known as "indigenous information") in order for their experience to be adapted and replicated. They also need financial information on their actual performance as well as access to credit. Kalusopa (2005) observed that three important areas emerged with regards to information needs of the small-scale farmers in general: farm management, dairy management and poultry equipment and technology. Some of information needs of the farmers in rural communities as highlighted by Aina (1991) include the identification and control of major pest; credit sources and cooperatives; proper handling of insecticides and marketing of agricultural products. Others include the best cropping methods for specific soils and given crops, crop diseases and how to treat them; planning demonstration and field-days, and advisory information on farming season inputs and requirements are some of the important information needs of farmers.

According to Ozowa (1995), the information needs may be grouped into five headings: agricultural inputs, extension education, agricultural technology, agricultural credit and marketing. Modern farm inputs are needed to raise small farm productivity. These inputs may include fertilizers, improved variety of seeds and seedlings, feeds, plant protection chemicals, agricultural machinery, equipment and water. Farmers' information needs include sources of implements, fertilizers and other agricultural input. Others include sources credit facilities, issues on land ownership and land disputes, and finally, where to market their produce. These are some of the agricultural needs of the farmers and other agricultural information users (Aina, 1991).

Sources/channels of Agricultural Information to Cooperative Farmers

Mass media and interpersonal communication are very crucial in the dissemination of information and also to create awareness among the rural farmers. Most of times, traditional or indigenous knowledge helps the farmers a lot by transmitting information from person to person (Mundy & Compton, 1997). Similarly Monu (1995) added that it must be based on the existing value and belief system of the community like the folk media so that the identification of networks of information flow provides deeper insight into the pattern of exchange of information in the farming community (Hossain, 1998). Indigenous people have their own traditional songs, stories, legends, dreams, methods and practices as means of transmitting specific elements of indigenous knowledge (Alan et. al. 1997). These media are amenable to the transmission of exogenous knowledge. Both Chatman (1983) and Aboyade (1987) revealed that a wide range of sources of agricultural information is available to farmers. Because of this, choice of appropriate medium is crucial in agricultural information delivery.

This is because the desire to use or not to use a particular information channel is affected by the channel's disposition and information demand characteristics (Lee, 1996). Information channel disposition, according to Lee, refers to the users' preferred means and styles of obtaining the needed information whereas information demand characteristics refer

to the quality pattern that user expects in the needed information. A source of information must be credible, reliable and, above all, familiar to the user before he would use it. Aboyade (1989) stated that oral tradition as a vehicle for information transfer in rural communities has hardly been fully utilized in any communicative effort. Akullo&Kanzikwera (2007) employ various indigenous practices most of which were cross cutting among the crops. Early practice of selection of clean planning materials, rudimentary post-harvest handling, farming mix and farmers knowledge of soil fertility are few areas in which farmers applied indigenous knowledge. This authors further identified different sources of indigenous knowledge as main sources were reported as interactions with the elderly, parents, grandparents, relatives and friends. Other common sources of indigenous knowledge are through technological advancement, migration of people from one part of the country to another with different ethnicity, radio programmes and extension workers. Aina (1989) posits that extension workers/librarians should be in position to contribute positively towards disseminating information to farmers; they also utilize other methods such as agricultural shows, posters, radio/television broadcast, farming, magazines, motion paucities/slides etc. He emphasized that these are channels through which libraries/extension workers can provide information to rural formers.

Public libraries must be established to function effectively in the provision of agricultural information to farmers in rural communities (Aina, 1986). Aboyade (1987) noted that librarians are expected to repackage information materials which have been tailored to meet the information needs of rural inhabitants in a language and format that they would understand. Traditional media and new ICTs have played a major role in diffusing information to rural communities, and have much more potential. There is need to connect rural communities, research and extension networks and provides access to the much needed knowledge, technology and services. Studies on information systems serving rural communities have focused on specific sectors such as agriculture or health, instead of covering the rural community needs in a holistic manner. Rural information systems must involve rural communities and local content must be of prime importance (Mchombu, 1993). Jacob (1999) noted that apart from information generated with each community, information from outside the vicinity reaches people through a variety of channels like the mass media, government ministries, agricultural extension workers, social welfare, community development officers, rural health personal etc. He emphasized that the pattern of information transfer activity is also characteristic of some other agent interacting with rural people, such as adult educators.

Meyer& Boom (2003) noted that farmers should be aware of online agricultural information services, also known as remote database services, allow access to information stored in mainframe computers by the of telephone links to microcomputers or computer terminals. Findlay, Zabawa, Morris &Oben (1993) stated in their findings that only seven percent of rural farmers are aware of the functions that personal computers could perform on the farm. The key to increased agricultural production ultimately lies with awareness of agricultural information to the farming community to facilitate the effective adoption of new production techniques, application of agricultural inputs, decision making on markets, prices and methods of conserving water, soil and vegetable resources (Kiplang, 1999). He also noted that the awareness of agricultural information is very crucial to the agricultural productivity of farmers because it is only through this means that they can learn about those things which they are not aware of and which can improve their production. The awareness of agricultural information is very important in their farming practices in order to have adequate food production. There seems to be a general awareness that information is an important resource. Meyer & Boom (2003) noted that farmers should be aware of online agricultural information services, also known as remote database services, allow access to information stored in mainframe computers by the of telephone links to microcomputers or computer terminals. Findlay, Zabawa, Morris &Oben (1993) stated in their findings that only seven percent of the limited-resource farmers in the five countries aware of the functions that personal computers could perform on the farm. The key to increased agricultural production ultimately lies with awareness of agricultural information to the farming community to facilitate the effective adoption of new production techniques, application of agricultural inputs, decision making on markets, prices and methods of conserving water, soil and vegetable resources (Kiplang, 1999). He also noted that the awareness of agricultural information is very crucial to the agricultural productivity of farmers because it is only through this means that they can learn about those things which they are not aware of and which can improve their production.

Problems militating against the use of Agricultural Information by Cooperative Farmers

Diso (2005) posits that structural and infrastructural problems, official corruption, unstable political and economic policies growing insecurity, and unstable power supply hamper the development of rural communities in Nigeria. The scholar stressed that rural inhabitants in the present day Nigeria are not reaping from the fruits of the enormous wealth of the country. Akullo&Kanzikwera (2007) highlighted the four major constraints in crop production as lack of knowledge on improved farming methods, inadequate extension services, lack of improved crop varieties and poor market coupled with low producer prices and unscrupulous middleman which in most case exploit farmers in many ways. Other constraints of importance were crop pests and diseases, lack of capital to purchase proper farm implements thus many farmers are condemned to using hand hoes. He went further to say that another challenge was unpredictable, unreliable weather conditions characterized by too much or less rainfall and sometimes drought.

Farmers lack capital to buy inputs like spray pumps and chemicals. Many cooperative farmers are unable to access loans due to high interest rates charged by banks. Limited lands to expand farming, declining soil fertility and high presence of vermin (baboons, monkey and rats/rodents) were also some of the challenges to crop production. Inadequate knowledge of how communication works lack of interagency corporation both in programme planning and implementation, and general lack of interest by extension agents in traditional media (Ozowa,1995). One of the obvious

constraints in the use of the broadcasting media in Nigeria is poor reception quality and area covered. The messages carried are not tailored to the information needs of rural populations. Even when the information is relevant, it is seldom aired at the proper time and so does not get to the targeted audience. Another major constraint is the use of the print media; leaflets and newsletters as message carriers are of limited use in reaching illiterate farmers. Technical language used in communicating information is incomprehensible to the farmers. Another major constraint to agricultural information is the inadequacy of the existing extension programmes. Some of these programmes are conceived without well thought out plans and are prepared in a hurry without the farmers whose attitude are to be changed making any input. Such agricultural information packages can neither sustain the farmers' interest nor effect the desired attitudinal change (Ozowa,1995).

Aina (1986) noted that the major problem faced by extension/information professionals is the level of illiteracy among rural dwellers. Information materials have to be repackaged to the format that can be understood by them, and this is a challenge to the information officer since the resources are limited. Another constraint observed is inadequate extension/information officers in rural areas. Mclean &Johnson (2003) pointed out that incessant power outage and most rural areas total blackout is one of the major problems faced by information officers in rural areas in Nigeria. They also pointed out that the problem of infrastructure is also apparent in the development of radio in rural areas. In their study, they noted that radio reception is limited to evenings and early mornings. Accessibility is a key factor in the selection of information channels. Barriers to information accessibility may be due to distance, language, power outage in case of using electronic source, technical problems etc. Lastly, they also noted that lack of ICT training program/personnel is also a problem encountered in rural communities' development (Mclean &Johnson, 2003). Kizilaslan (2006) argues that proper dissemination of information for agricultural and rural communities' development is a crucial tool in the fight against poverty and deprivation. Information helps the poor to avail of the opportunities and also reduce their vulnerability. Information officers in rural communities have not risen to the challenges of rural-based information services (Onohwakpor&Akporido, 2006). The authors stress that library-based information services like provision of books and other reading materials, SDI/CAS, reprographic, reference/referral and lending services are almost non-existent in some rural areas of the country.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research was employed in carrying out this work. A descriptive design was chosen because it would enable the researchers to study the existing situation or present condition of Gender and Information Needs, Sources, Problems in the use of Agricultural information by Cooperative Farmers in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta state. The population of this study consists of all co-operative farmers in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta state, who are duly registered with various cooperative societies. The villages are Obiaruku, Umutu, Umuaja, Ebedei, Amai and Umuebu. The population of co-operative farmers in Ukwuani Local Government Area is 218. This is derived from Delta State Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Asaba. The population is small and, thus the entire population was used for the study. According to Iwanma, Ohen, Ogbemor&Onwuegbu (1992), it is possible to study the entire population especially when the population is few, there is enough funds and time. This study falls into this category. The questionnaire entitled "Gender and information Needs, Sources and Problems in the use of Agricultural Information by Cooperative Farmers(GINSPQ)" was adopted as the instrument for data collection in this study. The questionnaire is made up of two sections. Section A contains the personal data of the respondents such as name of village, age and sex. Section B contained structure questions that help to determine gender and information needs, sources, and problems in the use of agricultural information by the respondents. The data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed using frequency counts and simple percentage.

RESULT AND INTERPRETATIONS

Table 1: Response rate of the respondents

S/N	NAME OF VILLAGES	NO OF QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED	NO OF QUESTIONNAIRE RETURNED	OF COMPLETED	%	NO OF QUESTIONNAIRE LOSS	%
1	Obiaruku	63	61		28	2	1
2	Umutu	35	34		16	1	1
3	Umuaja	34	34		16	--	--
4	Ebedei	30	27		12	3	1

Continuation of Tabel 1

5	Amai	37	37	17	--	--
6	Umuebu	19	17	8	2	1
TOTAL		218	210	97	8	4

Source: Delta State Ministry of Commerce and Industry (Cooperative Department), Asaba.

Table 1 above presents the response rate of the respondents. Obiaruku rank first with 63 copies of questionnaire administered, 63 (28%) were completed and returned while 2(1%) was loss. Amai ranked second with 37 copies of questionnaire administered, 37 (17%) were completed and returned and no loss copy recorded. Umutu came third with 35 copies of questionnaire administered, 34 (16%) were completed and returned while 1(1%) was loss. Umuaja also got high response with 34 copies of questionnaire administered, 34 (16%) were completed and returned. Ededei also received high response with 30 copies of questionnaire administered, 27 (12%) were completed and returned while 3(1%). Umuebu came last with 19 copies of questionnaire administered, 17 (8%) were completed and returned while 2 (1%) loss. However, the total response rate is 210 (97%) which is good enough for this study.

Table 2: Age of the Respondents

Age Brackets	Number	Percentage
Below 40 years	35	16.7
41-50 years	43	20.5
51 -60 years	55	26.2
61-70 years	41	19.5
71 - 80 years	23	10.9
Above 81 years	13	6.2
Total	210	100

Source: fieldwork, 2014

The above table shows that 55(26.2%) of the respondents are within the age bracket of 51-60 years, while 43(20.5%) are within 41-50 years. This shows that majority of the cooperative farmers are within the ages of 51-60 years. This clearly explain the obvious that the younger generation in this part of the world are not interested in agriculture, thereby leaving it for the older people of which majority would have retired from active service in favour of illegal ventures that will give them quick money.

Table 3: Sex of the Respondents

Sex	No	%
Male	119	57
Female	91	43
Total	210	100

Source: fieldwork, 2014

The table above revealed the sex of the respondents with Male 119(57%) and female 91(43%). This is an indication that there are more male cooperative farmers than female cooperative farmers in Ukwuani Local Government Area.

Research Question one

What are the agricultural information needs of both sexes of the cooperative farmers in Ukwuani local government area?

Table 4: Agricultural Information Needs of cooperative farmers.

Information needs	Sex	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Where to get fertilizer	Male	79	66	36	30	4	3	119	100
	Female	62	68	26	29	3	3	91	100
Where to get implement/tools/machinery	Male	70	59	37	31	12	10	119	100
	Female	55	60	28	31	8	9	91	100
Pests and disease control	Male	92	77	22	18	5	4	119	100
	Female	69	76	18	20	4	4	91	100
Where to sell farm products	Male	61	51	49	41	9	8	119	100
	Female	60	66	30	33	1	1	91	100
Improved method of farming	Male	90	76	23	19	6	5	119	100
	Female	70	77	18	20	3	3	91	100
How and/or where to store/preserve and sell my products	Male	80	67	30	25	9	8	119	100
	Female	60	66	1	1	30	33	91	100
Where to get seeds for Cultivation	Male	75	63	40	34	4	3	119	100
	Female	55	60	35	38	1	1	91	100
How to obtain credit/loan Facilities	Male	85	71	27	23	7	6	119	100
	Female	79	87	11	12	1	1	91	100

Source: Field work 2014

The analyzed data in table 4 reveals that majority of the respondents male 92(77%), female 69(76%), need agricultural information on pests and disease control. On the item of improve method of farming, the male respondents has the highest responses of 90 (76%) as against the female 70(77%). The table also presented 85(71%) of male respondents and 79(87%) of female respondents need agricultural information on how to obtain credit /loan facilities. A majority of the respondents also agree that they need information on how or where to store/ preserve and sell their produce with 80(67%) male and 60(66%) female. This study with respect to agricultural information needs cooperative farmers corroborate the previous studies by (Aboyade, 1987; Kaniki, 1989; Aina, 1991 and Ozowa, 1995) which reported that farmer's needs information that involves cultivating, fertilizing, pest control, credit sources and marketing of agricultural products. From the analysis above it shows that cooperative farmers need information on pest and disease control, how to obtain credit/loan facilities, improved method of farming and where to get fertilizer in this order. It is obvious from the table that only few respondents from both sexes indicate that they need information on where to get implement/tools/machinery. The reason may be due to the fact that they do not embark on commercial farming or mechanized farming due to lack of fund and land fragmentation.

Research Question Two

What are the information sources/channels consulted by the cooperative farmers in meeting their agricultural information needs?

Table5.Shows the different sources/channels cooperative farmers consult in meeting their agricultural information needs. However, personal experience ranks first with male 100 (84 %), female 81(89%). Female percentage is higher. This finding corroborates with Adomi, Ogbomo&Inoni (2003) who reported in their study that farmers rely heavily on personal experience as source of information for their work 53 (77.6%) male and 51(69.9%) female. This implies that both sexes rely very much on their previous knowledge of agricultural practice. Farmers according to Akullo&Kanzikwera, (2007) employed various indigenous practices most of which were cross cutting among the crops.

Table 5: Sources of Agricultural information mostly use by Male and Female Cooperative Farmers.

sources/channels	Sex	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Personal experience	Male	100	84	19	16	-	-	119	100
	Female	81	89	10	11	-	-	91	100
Extension officers	Male	59	50	41	34	19	16	119	100
	Female	40	44	51	56	-	-	91	100
Television	Male	74	62	41	35	4	3	119	100
	Female	51	56	22	24	18	20	91	100
Radio	Male	80	67	12	10	27	23	119	100
	Female	42	46	28	24	21	23	91	100
Newspapers	Male	62	53	33	28	24	20	119	100
	Female	39	43	41	45	11	12	91	100
Magazine	Male	56	47	35	29	28	24	119	100
	Female	40	44	38	42	13	14	91	100
Libraries	Male	49	41	62	52	8	7	119	100
	Female	39	43	46	52	6	6	91	100
Cooperative society	Male	85	71	21	18	13	11	119	100
	Female	60	66	15	17	16	18	91	100
Neighbors/friends	Male	100	84	11	9	8	7	119	100
	Female	78	86	8	9	5	5	91	100
Agricultural shows/exhibitions	Male	59	50	56	47	4	3	119	100
	Female	49	54	39	43	3	3	91	100

Source: Field work 2014

These scholars further identified different sources of indigenous knowledge as main sources were reported as interactions with the elderly, parents, grandparents, relatives and friends. Neighbours / Friends ranks second with female having the highest percentage of 78(86%) as against the male percentage of 100(84%) respondents. This is followed by cooperative society with male 85 (71%) against female 60(66%). This finding is in congruence with the study of Abayode(1987) who stated that oral tradition is a vehicle for information transfer in rural communities. This also corroborates with the work of Adomi, Ogbomo&Inoni (2003) who stressed that another source, which the farmers consult to a significant degree for their agricultural information is neighbours/friends. This is a quick way of obtaining oral information. The possible reason for this could be that these are the people they frequently interact with on daily basis, with whom they share experiences and seek information. However, male respondents rank higher to the use of newspapers with 62 (53%) and 39(43%)female. Television also ranks high among male cooperative farmers with 74(62%) and 51(56%) female. Male respondents also responded high to radio with 80(71%) and 42 (46%).The reasons for this is not far-fetched because some of the female respondents may possibly be busy with domestic shores after their normal farming activities, and they may not have the time or strength to listen to news, watch television or read newspapers. This study contradict the work of Morgan (1993) who reported that radio is one of the main sources of information for rural female farmers; in a study carried out in Kenya, it was indicated that 80% of the population that owned radio were male/ However, the female percentage of listeners to radio information were higher than the male.However, the study is in conformity with the work of Munyua(2000) who asserts that radio, audiovisuals, print technology, etc, would also be of great help to female farmers in this information age.

Research question three

What are the problems militating against cooperative farmers' efforts in the use of agricultural information?

Table 6: Problems militating Against the Use of Agricultural Information by both male and female Cooperative Farmers

Table 6

Impediments	Sex	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Lack of visitation by Agricultural extension officers	Male	88	74	21	18	10	8	119	100
	Female	69	76	18	20	4	4	91	100
I do not know how to read (illiteracy)	Male	52	44	36	30	31	26	119	100
	Female	41	45	14	15	36	40	91	100
Lack of agricultural information materials in my own native language	Male	77	62	24	20	21	18	119	100
	Female	62	68	16	18	13	14	91	100
Lack of (personal) radio	Male	49	41	50	42	20	17	119	100
	Female	32	35	48	53	11	12	91	100
Lack of (personal) Television	Male	50	42	55	46	14	12	119	100
	Female	35	38	49	54	7	8	91	100
No nearby library	Male	101	84	5	4	13	11	119	100
	Female	80	88	6	7	5	5	91	100
Lack of computer knowledge and access to agricultural databases	Male	81	68	23	19	15	13	119	100
	Female	68	75	19	21	4	4	91	100
Untimely information	Male	109	92	10	8	-	-	119	100
	Female	78	86	-	-	13	14	91	100
Erratic power supply	Male	111	93	8	7	--	--	119	100
	Female	88	97	--	--	3	3	91	100

Source: Field work 2014

Table 6 above shows the problems militating against the use of agricultural information by cooperative farmers. Erratic power supply rank high from both sexes as major hindrance to the use of agricultural information by cooperative farmers with 111(93%) male and 86(97%) female. This finding conforms to study of Mclean & Johnson (2003) pointed out that incessant power outage and most rural areas total blackout is one of the major problem faced by information officers in rural areas in Nigeria. Both sexes agreed that untimely information, as one of the major problem militating against the use of agricultural information. Male respondents have the highest response of 109 (92%) as against female responses of 78(86%). This was also supported by Youdeouei, Adiallo& Spiff, (1996) as cited by Adomi, Ogbomo&Inoni (2003) that one of the most serious constraints confronting agricultural development is limited access to agricultural information. The findings also reveals that male 101(84%), female 80(88%) revealed that lack of visitation by agricultural extension officer is another major problem militating against the use of agricultural information by cooperative farmers of both sexes with the females' percentage strictly higher than the males. This finding disagree with the work of Nosheen& Ahmad (2010) that pointed out that all the extension activities were directed only towards the male farmers and not a single institute present to provide knowledge and training about the various aspects of agriculture and home management, which totally corner the women in dissemination of desired information. They were unable to get benefit from any major source of information, however, they shared any type of information with their female relatives or a negligible number may share with their husbands. In these hostile conditions how it is possible to gear up the process of development by neglecting half of the population of country. However, the finding is in conformity with the study of Ozowa (1995) who opined that status difference between extension officers and their clients, general lack of interest by extension officers and inadequacy of the existing extension programmes are major problems.No nearby library also received high response from both sexes with 80 (88%) female and 101 (84%) male.the females percentage is higher than their male counterparts'. This finding agrees with the study of Onohwakpor&Akporido (2006) which revealed that library-based information services like provision of books and other reading materials, SDI/CAS, reprographic, reference/referral and lending services are almost non-existent in some rural areas of the country. Both sexes agreed that they lack computer knowledge and access to agricultural databases with male 81 (68%) and female 68(75%). Also, lack of agricultural information in my own native language was agreed on by both sexes of cooperative farmers in rural areas as a problem militating against their use of agricultural information with 77(62%) male and 62 (68% female). However, I do not know how to read (illiteracy), lack of personal radio and television were not seen as major problems by the respondents as

revealed in the table above.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The study reveals that:

Both sexes agreed that they need agricultural information on pests and disease control; improve method of farming, on how to obtain credit /loan facilities and where to store and sell their produce among others.

The study also revealed that both sexes agreed personal experience, Neighbours / Friends, and Cooperative society are some of their major sources of agricultural information.

It was discovered from the study that male members of the cooperativesocieties listen to radio, watch television and read newspapers than their female counterparts.

The study points out that a majority of the respondents agreed that erratic power supply, untimely information, lack of visitation by agricultural extension officer, no nearby library, lack of computer knowledge and access to agricultural databases and lack of agricultural information in my native languageare some of the problems militating against the use of information by cooperative farmers.

The study revealed that illiteracy, lack of personal radio and television are not major factors militating against the use of information by cooperative farmers.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that agricultural information is of utmost important to cooperative farmers of both sexes in order to increase productivity. This is because, they need information in the area of pests and disease control, how to obtain credit/loan facilities, where to get fertilizer, where to sell farm products among other information needs. It is very vivid from the study that both sexes of cooperative farmers 'agreed that they utilized personal experience, Neighbours / Friends, and cooperative society as some of their major sources of agricultural information. However, male cooperative farmers have access to agricultural information by reading newspapers, listen to radio programmes and watch television than their female counterparts.

Finally, a majority of both male and female cooperative farmers faced problems when sourcing or using agricultural information,such problems as erratic power supply, untimely information, lack of visitation by agricultural extension officer,no nearby library, lack of computer knowledge or access agricultural databases and lack of agricultural information in my native language. Both sexes of cooperative farmers do not see illiteracy, lack of personal radio and television as major problems hampering their use of agricultural information.

Recommendations

Government, information officers, agricultural extension workers andother relevant bodies should ensure that cooperative and other rural farmers are provided with accurate and timely agricultural informationon pests and disease control; improve method of farming, on how to obtain credit /loan facilities and where to store and sell their produce among others.

The government should try to ameliorate the impediments militating against the efforts of cooperative farmers while seeking agricultural information by addressing holistically the erratic power situation in rural areas and the nation at large.

Government and non-governmental organizations must deem it necessary to organize sensitization programme in rural areas on the need for female cooperative or rural farmers to develop interest in reading newspapers, listening and watching news and other educative programmes on radio and television.

Government should establish branches of public libraries in all the communities in rural area to enable both sexes ofcooperative and other rural farmersto have access to timely and relevant agricultural information.

Agricultural extension officers should be mobilized and empowered by government and other relevant authorities with all the basic facilities and logistics necessary for them to perform their assignment.

Government and relevant agencies should make effort to translate some vital agricultural information into the native languages of the cooperative and other rural or native farmers.

Computer and internet Centre should be set up in rural areas by governmentand other well-meaning citizenry of the rural communities to teach rural dwellers or cooperative farmers on how to use computers and to enable them access information on agricultural databases.

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