

Short communication

Agricultural information needs of women farmers in Mubi region, Adamawa State

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Abstract

The information needs of women farmers in the Mubi region of Nigeria was evaluated in a multi-stage random sampling process involving 300 respondents registered with the Agricultural Development Project of Adamawa State in 2006. Results indicate that 76% of the respondents were below 40 years, and 50% were married. Sorghum, maize, cowpea, and groundnut were the common crops cultivated. The women farmers required information on weather, soil management, credit availability, and farm management, besides awareness on improved seedlings, fertilizer and insecticides, animal health, future market prices, land tenure, child immunization, and vaccination for animals. The inferential statistics indicate that the responses were not similar for most of the information resource needs. The information needs of women farmers in these locations should, therefore, be tailored along the preferred needs.

Keywords: Agricultural technology, Information packages, Credit availability.

Women participation in agricultural production is not a new phenomenon. They contribute about 60% of the labour force, produce 80% of food, earn 10% of the monetary income, but own just 1% of the farm assets (Banji and Okuade, 2005). Stanley (1990) posited that information is one of the basic needs after air, water, food, and shelter and the developments in society depend largely on the availability and access to accurate and reliable information. Expectedly, the information generated from different sources should reach the intended users and ultimately meet their needs. Variations in the information needs of women farmers in the south western Nigeria have been demonstrated (Banmeke and Olowu, 2005). Socioeconomic variables may influence the agricultural information needs of the women farmers in Mubi region. Specific information needs of the target audience should be taken into consideration, to meet their needs and aspirations (Banmeke and Olowu, 2005). In this circumstance, a study was conducted to determine the agricultural information needs of the women farmers of Mubi region.

Two districts each from Maiha local Government area (Maiha and Gere), Michika local Government area (Michika and Bassa), Mubi south local Government area (Mubi and Gella), and Mubi north local Government area (Vintim and MayoBani) were purposively selected for their high agricultural activities and population density (Adebayo and Tukur, 1999). A multi-stage random sampling procedure was used in which the first stage involved selecting the local government areas, and then the districts and the respondents (women farmers registered with the Adamawa State Agricultural Development project). The Village Extension Agents (VEA) administered the questionnaires. One hundred and twenty women farmers were selected and interviewed in Mubi south and 60 each for Mubi north, Maiha and Michika local government area, making 300 respondents totally. The variables evaluated in the study includes age, level of education, marital status, and types of crop grown, besides the information needs of women farmers. The data collected were summarized and analyzed using frequency counts, percentage, Chi-square, and one-way

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analysis of variance using statistical analysis of SAS institute (SAS, 1998).

Regarding the respondents' profile, 42% of the respondents were below 30 years of age and 33% were within the age bracket of 31 to 40 years. Age brackets 18 to 30 years and 30 to 40 years together accounted for 76%. Yahaya (2000) and Sabo (2004) also reported similar results for women farmers in the southwestern and Borno states of Nigeria. This study further showed that 60% of the respondents (181 women farmers) had no formal education compared to 40% with formal education. This, however, is not in complete agreement with the findings of Banmeke and Olomu (2005), who noted that women farmers in southern Nigeria had no formal education. Again, those with formal education studied up to the secondary level only. About 50% of women farmers interviewed were married, 32% single, 10% widowed, and 7% divorced. Women farmers with 4 to 6 children accounted for 28%, while those with more than 10 children constituted 28%. The major crops grown by these women farmers include sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor*), maize (*Zea mays*), cowpea (*Vigna unguiculata*), groundnut (*Arachis hypogea*), bambara nut (*Vigna subterranea*), besides rearing of small ruminants like sheep and goats.

This evaluation indicated that women farmers in Mubi

region require to a "large extent" information on weather pattern (48%), soil management (48%), improved seedlings (46%), intercropping (54%), fertilizer availability (42%), insecticide availability (46%), pesticide application methods (57%), and post harvest processing of farm produce (46%). This is similar to the trends previously reported by Yahaya (1995). Regarding socioeconomic parameters, the women desired information on how to increase farm income (59%), prices of the farm produce (51%), future market prices (61%), and prices of products from other states (50%). Yahaya (1995) also indicated that women farmers in north central Nigeria needed information on market prices.

Additionally, women farmers in Mubi region also required information on credit availability (40%), agricultural insurance (40%), cooperative association (50%), and risk management (43%). Land being either on lease or on rent, the desirability for information on land tenure system was rated high (74%). Indeed, the socio-cultural situations in the study area forbid women as heirs to properties (land). Women farmers also required information on drugs for farm animals (44%), farm housing (45%), and animal vaccination (81%), as they kept small ruminants (sheep and goats).

The Chi-square test of independence of the responses

Table 1. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) for information need by women farmers across nine locations in Mubi region, Nigeria (n=300).

| Information need | Df | Mean square | Error | CV |
|-------------------------------------|----|-------------|--------|-------|
| Agricultural activities | 8 | 327.90** | 113.16 | 59.68 |
| Fertilizer availability | 8 | 2.20** | 0.52 | 38.38 |
| Fertilizer application methods | 8 | 0.45ns | 0.53 | 38.62 |
| Insecticides availability | 8 | 1.08** | 0.52 | 35.99 |
| Pesticides application methods | 8 | 0.39ns | 0.59 | 41.10 |
| Storage methods | 8 | 1.42** | 0.95 | 39.17 |
| Animal health | 8 | 1.31** | 0.07 | 36.66 |
| Credit availability | 8 | 1.52** | 0.65 | 12.33 |
| Prices of produce from other states | 8 | 2.13** | 0.08 | 41.80 |
| Labour availability | 8 | 1.55** | 0.35 | 40.67 |
| Agric insurance policy | 8 | 4.36** | 0.66 | 41.27 |
| Information on weather | 8 | 0.98ns | 0.56 | 44.12 |

**=significant at 1 % level of probability; ns= not significant.

(“large extent”, “some extent”, “not at all”) for agricultural technology information packages by women farmers indicated that the responses were statistically independent ($p < 0.05$). Results of the one-way analysis of variance revealed significant differences ($p < 0.05$) for most of the variables evaluated across the locations (Table 1). Information need on fertilizer and pesticides application methods and weather were largely similar within the Mubi region.

This study revealed that women farmers do undertake arable crop farming and, to a lesser extent, practice animal husbandry, besides household activities. Empirical evidences from this study also suggest that extension delivery system directed at women farmers in Mubi region of Adamawa State should primarily focus on providing information on weather, soil management, improved seedlings, fertilizer application, insecticides availability, future market prices, credit availability, and agricultural insurance.

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