

TELEVISION INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AT WARD LEVEL AS A KEY TO SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The use of information in agricultural development in Nigeria is not absolutely new. Town criers, arm visits, posters, group discussion, pamphlets, radio and television were used by government to disseminate information to people. This paper emphasized the expansion of television centres at 7740 wards (group/contact farmers). The use of television at ward levels is not aimed at replacing the extension agents rather they are aimed at making him function better, thus making his job more meaningful. It would also make it possible for about 90million scattered Nigerian food producers to easily and quickly benefit from the public expenditure on agrarian research in Nigeria at the right time. It is in realization of the above, the paper focused on implications and prospective impact of television in sustainable agricultural production. In addition it highlighted some strategies and suggestions for effective television centre in each ward for sustainable agricultural production in Nigeria.

Introduction

For any agricultural development thrust to have the required impact, farmers must be seen to have been benefited in the form of rising productivity and aggregate production. Reaching them therefore, can effectively and efficiently be attained using television broadcast. Nigeria with her abundant human and natural resources can successfully undertake television projects at ward levels as mass agricultural information dissemination campaign to rural farmers for sustainable agricultural, production in the country.

According to Olayide (1980) effective system of disseminating information (agricultural research results) is a tool of liberation from ignorance, poverty and disease. If you disseminate an appropriate information through appropriate media to peasant farmers, you give them the potential to improve themselves. Therefore, any improvement in sustainable agricultural production in Nigeria should involve farmers' television information at ward and their productive potential.

UNESCO (1967) observed that the in-class use of television in Nigeria began 1959. The Federal Ministry of Education decided to concentrate its educational television activities at primary, secondary and teacher training levels. The television programmes were aimed specifically at:

- i. the reduction of teaching deficiencies in certain syllabus courses such as mathematics, agricultural science (natural science) and English languages and;
- ii. providing examples of good teaching to upgrade the general quality of classroom instruction.

In the Cote d'Ivoire, television is used to re-orient primary education towards rural development. Mexico has succeeded with its television programme to extend access to secondary education to thousands of primary school graduates who otherwise would have gone without. Television programme are broadcast for 1/12 hours on each of the five school days of the week. Young, Parcaton and Jenkins (1980) have compared teaching by television with face-face teaching, have found no significant differences between the results. It has been shown that television teaching can be successful in all subjects, but it is most successful in the hard subjects, like mathematics, chemistry and agricultural science.

Nwobu (1999) said that, there is much Nigerians can learn from Israel's agricultural miracles, because they subdued all hostile elements (semi-arid or non-arable landmass, salinity, non resources, scanty rainfall and brackish sea water). A country that was once barely able to feed its population now exports agricultural products to all corners of the globe in addition to satisfying over 90% of its domestic food requirements. Israelis did this through an effective two-way flow of agricultural

information using television as medium of information between farmers in the field and researchers working in the laboratories. This is another area where Nigerians have to take a cue.

Definition Of Concepts

Agriculture: Is the production of plants and animals useful to man, the cultivation of soil, management of crops, breeding and management of livestock, preparation of plant and animal products used by man and disposal of these products by marketing.

Agriculture research Institute An organisation of experts in agriculture for the purpose of carrying out a systematic investigation of some agricultural phenomenon by experimental method and disseminate the research results to the farmers, e.g IAR, Zaria, IITA, C'RIN and FRIN, Ibadan; NAPRI, Chika: DPR. Benin; NAMEC, Ilorin; VRI. Jos; NRTRI, Umudike; and faculties of agriculture in University .

Information Ethnology: Is te study or use of processes (especially computers, telecommunications, satellite, compact Disc, read only memory, television etc), for storing, retrieving and sending information of all kinds (e.g words, numbers, pictures etc) to people.

TELEVISION Information Technology in Agriculture: The use of processes especially television for sending information of all kinds (agricultural research) to people, particularly the farmers.

Sustainable Agricultural Development: Is the skillful knowledge of agricultural production process which guarantees and satisfies the needs of people of today without compromising those of future generation (next millennium) to come.

The Importance Of Sustainable Agriculture Development In The Next Millennium

America is a powerful nation in the world today and possibly in the next millennium, because she can conveniently feed her teeming population with quality and quantity food human beings need food for happy home, a peaceful nation, longlife and politicking in the next millennium. This food can only be easily made available in sustainable agricultural development. Sustainable agricultural development eliminates unemployment backwardness and poverty in any country that values it, because it provides employment for both skilled and unskilled labour, either individually as subsistence farmer or collectively as in agro-allied industries.

It provides volume of export which generate the necessary foreign exchange required to pay for capital and essential goods like tractors, constructions, health and educational facilities, encourages industrial development which is an important sector in sustainable national development in Nigeria, it increases revenue generation of farmers and many other people who work in agricultural related business and inculcates citizenship such as leadership, cooperation and respect for the worth and dignity of the individual in people which are key factors in sustaining the democracy (Abdulazeez, 1999).

Prospects Of Television Information Technology At Ward Level As A Key To Sustainable Agricultural Development In Nigeria.

Television is an audio-visual aid which engages both the sense of hearing and the sense of seeing at the same time. It combines the principles of the camera with the behaviours of electromagnetic waves to produce sound and vision. The television information technology at ward level will:

- i. Speed up dissemination of latest discovery in agriculture (such as agricultural tools and implements, planting time, agricultural chemicals, credit facilities, improved planting materials and improved breeds of livestock) to millions of scattered farmers in Nigeria.
- ii. Preserve farm records and farm documents;
- iii. Encourage individual or group learning;
- iv. Allow farmers to learn at their own locality;
- v. Not require transportation in terms of personnel vehicles and fuel;
- vi. Allow agricultural information to be disseminated to farmers at any time;
- vii. Allows the presenter to be seen and heard;
- viii. Permit the food producer, agricultural marketers, consumers and policy makers to be aware of market mechanisms in a possible short time;
- ix. Bring agricultural world close to the rural people and the television is very simple to operate

Implications

The method of mass dissemination of agricultural information to rural farmers at rural or ward level which involves the use of television will find widest application in a literature community of farmers where the basic infrastructure such as road and electricity are available and fairly dependable.

The major disadvantages of this method are:

- i. impersonal nature which prevents face-to-face contact and the consequent development of mutual contact and trust;
- ii. problem of maintenance and power supply;
- iii. multi-lingua, topography and the low levels of literacy of Nigeria rural farmers;
- iv. funds for construction of television centres at ward levels and cost of acquiring the television gadgets.

Recommendations

If any agricultural development is to have important and lasting effects on the people of today and generations in the next millennium Federal Government of Nigeria has to adopt the use of television at ward levels to disseminate agricultural information to about 90 millions of the primary food producers in this country.

This paper suggests that:

- i. functional television centre should be established in each ward of the federation;
- ii. an agricultural science education information department should be incorporated into Nigerian television programmes;
- iii. reasonable amount of funds should be made available to NEPA for regular supply of electricity to every nook and corner of Nigeria;
- iv. with an efficient NITEL services one-way traffic (from agricultural researcher to rural farmers only) can be modified as being done with personality interview and Tuesday night on NTA;
- v. agricultural extension officers should not see the television information technology at ward as the new technology that would replace them rather it would make them function better and more efficiently;
- vi. a suitable medium (English Language) should be employed to disseminate information to the rural farmers;
- vii. agricultural information should be broadcast on NTA between 6-8a.m and 8-10p.m on Saturdays.

Conclusion

Television information technology has the unique advantages of reaching a large number of people in a short time, combining sound and image in an immediate multi-dimensional message, it can transcend the limits of space and time either by open broadcast, closed circuit or recorded transmission and can be used to disseminate agricultural research breakthrough. The great success of television programmes such as personality programme, news line, tonight at 9, Kith and kin and Network News show the potential of television as an instrument of appropriate information technology for sustainable agricultural production in Nigeria.

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