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PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AGENTS DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN ANAMBRA STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study was aimed at investigating into the problems encounter by the agricultural extension agents during the implementation of the agricultural value chain development programme in Anambra State. All the two hundred and five extension agents that participated during implementation of the value chain development programme in Anambra State made up the population of the study. One hundred agents were randomly selected for data collection. Date was collected by the use of questionnaire made up of eleven items. The data collected was analyzed by the use of percentage methods. It was found that that the agents faced problem of communication, high level of illiteracy on the part of the farmers, much workload on the agents among other. Such recommendations as provision of credit facilities, employment of more workers, rehabilitation of road networks and provision of transportation facilities among others were made to save the agents' problems.

Keywords: Problems; Agricultural Extension; Agents; Implementation; Value Chain Development Programme

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Introduction

Agriculture is mostly seen as an integrated approach designed to improving the environment and wellbeing of the people of the community (Dooember, et al, 2020). The first step in the process of agricultural development is to abandon the view of agriculture in pre-modern or traditional societies as essential static. However, the problem of Agricultural development is not that of transforming a static agricultural sector into a modem, dynamic or progressive: sector, but of accelerating theater of increase in agricultural and productivity consistent with the growth of other sectors of a modernizing economy. For the purpose of this work the Value Chain Development Programme which is one of the agricultural programmes introduced by the government of Nigeria to promote agricultural productivity, national economic development is considered.

Value chain comprises full range of activities and Services required to bring a particular product through the different phases of production and delivery., to the final consumers (International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) 2018) The term value chain also refers to the importance, that value is added to products across one link to the next one in the chain through the combination of knowledge and resources (Dubey Rajeev Swatentra, Abhishek and Nikhil, 2020; Ovidijus, 2013). Value chain is a business model that describes full range of activities needed in creating a product or service (Tardi and Brock. 2020). It is a concept describing the full chain of a business's activities in the creation of a product ranging from the initial reception of materials all the way through its delivery to market, and everything in between (Chai, 2021).

From the organizational and institutional view, a value chain can be analyzed as the formal and informal arrangements that allows coordination and collaboration links across actors and at different points along the chain (IFAD, 2018). United States Agency for International Development (2020) and Inter-American Development Bank (2013) described it as a full range of activities that are required to bring a product or service from its conception to its end use, including all the market channels available to all firms. A value chain in agriculture identifies the set of actors and activities that bring a basic agricultural product from production in the field to final consumption, where at each stage value is added to the product (Danish Refugee Council (DRC), 2020). It is a set of linked activities that work to add value to a product, and consists of actors and actions that can improve a product while linking commodity producers to processors and markets (Funmilola, Olawale and Nwadihi, 2018). It is an economic system around a particular commercial product with focus on value addition along sequence of activities of providing inputs, producing- transforming, marketing and consumption. A value chain focuses on the degree of coordination and collaboration between the value chain operators or actors and business model tor particular commercial product (FAO, 2014).

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According to SANREM (2020), value chain can be a vertical linking or a network between various independent business organizations and can involve processing. packaging, storage, transport and distribution. It works better when the actors involved cooperate to produce higher-quality products and generate more income for all participants along the chain, as opposed to the simplest kinds of value chains, in which producers and buyers exchange only price information (Norton, 2014). It encompasses the flow of products, knowledge and information, finance, payments, and the social capital needed to organize the producers and communities. Example, for firms that produce goods and services, a value chain operation will comprise the steps that are involved in bringing a product from conception to distribution, and everything in between, such as procurement of raw materials, manufacturing, and marketing activities. Information needed in value chain is especially important to all value chain actors, and flows in two directions: markets inform producers of price, quantity and quality needs, product handling and technology options, while producers inform processors and markets about quantity of production, locations, and timing and production issues (Norton, 2014).

Agricultural value chain includes a wide range of activities such as development and dissemination of plant and animal genetic material, input distribution, farmer organization, farm production, post-harvest handling processing. provision of technologies for production, grading facilities, cooling and packing technologies, post-harvest local processing, industrial processing, storage, transport, finance, and feedback from customers or markets (Norton, 2014). At the heart of the agricultural value chain concept, is the idea of actors connected along a chain producing and delivering goods to consumers through a sequence of processes (Henriksen, Riisgaard, Ponte, Hartwich and Kormawa 2010). However, "vertical" chain cannot function in isolation and an important aspect of the value approach is that it also considers “horizontal” impacts on the chain such as input supply, Finance provision, extension support and the general enabling environment. The approach t been found useful, particularly by donors, in that it has resulted in a consideration of a factors impacting on the ability of farmers to access markets profitably, leading to a range of chain interventions. It is used both for unbearding existing chains and for do identify market opportunities for small farmers (Wikipedia, 2021).

The value chain approach in agricultural development helps identify weak points in the chain and actions to add more value (Norton, 2014), The framework helps organizations identify and group their own business functions into primary and secondary activities (Chai, 2021). Value chain works best when operators cooperate to produce higher-quality products and generate more income for all participants along the chain, as opposed to the simplest kinds of value chain, in which producers and buyers exchange only price information. According to Rex (2013), the value chain

approach considers the role of existing chain actors, supporting actors, and the policy environment. It allows the actors to look at current challenges in value chain, as well as the opportunities for improving the efficiency of the value chain and the benefits for everyone involved. Sometimes, participating in a well-functioning value chain brings farmers hot higher incomes alone, but attract young people to farming or persuade them not to leave rural areas by offering better ways to earn money and as well, help the farmer learn new skills and adopt improved practices (Chapota, 2013).

According to International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (2012), the Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP) is a six-year agricultural development intervention programme initiated and implemented by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The programme was designed to improve both cassava and rice value chains for small-scale farmers in six selected states of the Federation Anambra, Benue, Ebonyi, Niger, Ogun and Taraba. The Value Chain Development Programme emerged from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) with Country Strategic Opportunities Programme (COSOP) of between 2010 and 2015 periods (IFAD, 2012). The Development with Country Strategic Opportunities Programme which was established on the recommendations of the Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) was Carried out in 2008/2009 April, 2009 by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and International Fund for Agricultural Development. The Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) recommendations laid emphases on the future IFAD interventions on Agriculture, with emphasis on the enhancement of productivity and access to market (Fumilola, 2018),

The Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP) is anchored on Nigeria governments vision for Agricultural Transformation through commodity value chain approach which was an approach designed to tackle the challenges of smallholder farmers (Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP), 2020). The goal of the programme is to reduce rural poverty, increase food security and accelerate economic growth on a sustainable basis by proffering solutions to limited access to productive assets and inputs, low productivity, limited opportunities for value addition, inadequate support services such as extension services, inability to access rural financial services, inadequate market and infrastructure (Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP), 2020). According to Mgbenika and Mbah (2016), the primary target groups for the VCDP are the poor rural households engaged in cassava and rice value chains. This includes the 15,000 smallholder farmers cultivating up to five hectares of land devoted to cassava and rice, I,680 small-scale processors and 800 traders as direct beneficiaries with emphasis on women and youth; and 22,000 indirect beneficiaries, benefitting largely from the

infrastructure improvements, amongst other things.

The Value Chain Development Programme is coordinated under the technical responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) and the State Ministries of Agriculture (MoAs) whilst implementation at the national level receives oversight and guidance from the Value Chain Steering Committee (VCSC), Federal Ministry of Agriculture Development (FMARD) as the lead implementing agency, delegates' the function and day-to-day implementation and coordination responsibilities to the National Programme management Unit (NPMU). In each of the selected states, the daily implementation of the programme is handled by the State Programme Management Unit, which ensures effective and efficient implementation of the programme activities at the state and Local Government Area level. The programmne which is domiciled in the Federal Ministry of Agricultures and Rural Development is implemented through the following components:

- Agricultural Market Development;
- Smallholder Productivity Enhancement: and
- Programme Management and Coordination.

According to Global Value Chain Initiative (GVCI) (2007) as cited in Ewuzie, Ifediora and Anctolh (2020), value chain is an arrangement that describes the linkages of participants and their value creating activities that enhance the movement of goods and services from production, processing, marketing to the end user. In agricultural parlance, the term "value chain" is used interchangeably with such terms as supply chain, market system, and agri-food chain, depending on what is being considered. Based on agri-food sector perspective, Drummond and Goodwin (2011), defined value chain as all activities and processes that occur between producers of food and ultimate consumers. According to Donovan, Franzel, Cunha, Gyau and Mithöfer (2015), donor agencies like USAID, FADAMA, and IFAD usage of value chain is in line with World Bank (2010) definition which describes value chain as full range of Value adding activities required to bring a product or service through different phases of Production including the procurement of raw materials and other input. The concept of value was introduced to improve productivity and profitability of the actors in the agricultural sector (Ewuzie, Ifediora and Anctoh. 2020) The notion of agricultural value chain underscores system approach to value added activities where the action of one component in a system affects every other component within the system

According to Ugwuonah (2017), the idea of the value chain is relatively new in agricultural sector it is however, resides at the core of high-impact and sustainable initiatives focused on improving productivity, competitiveness and growth of Small-Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Recently, most of the agricultural intervention programmes, initiated and implemented in agricultural sectors by both government and

non-government agencies (donors) take the value chain approach. The value chain approach has shifted focus and emphasis away from agricultural production to consumer demand, marketing and the coordination of product flow from producer to consumer (Ewuzie, et al, 2020) The value chain concept acknowledges that production must be linked to demand and the critical role of organizing the flow from farmer to consumer opportunities must be taken into consideration. A value chain links the steps a product takes from the producer to the consumer. It. therefore, includes research and development, input suppliers, production, processing, marketing and finance (Norton, 2014).

An agricultural value chain starts with the provision of farm inputs which include seed, fertilizer and other agro chemicals used in the cultivation of crops (Rex, 2013). All the inputs are provided by the agro input dealers to the farmer who uses them in the production of agricultural crops and livestock. Whereas, according to Ewuzie, et al, (2020), the production component entails the actual production activities which culminates in the usage of farm inputs in a way that it is prescribed by the agricultural technologies for a particular commodity to produce the required produce. Value chains are created for the better understanding of consumer needs to respond to these requirements in better and more strategic way. The trade components entail exchange and distribution activities that are carried on at the primary product level by marketing middlemen, Processing has to do with value addition activities which is concerned with the change in form of the produce. Besides these activities that are central to a value chain, the business environment and provision of allied services also affect the value chain and as such constitute part of the value chain. Activities of the various participants in the value chain are expected to increase the value that is added to the products and Shrestha (2012) further opined that participants' conduct along the chain determines the efficiency and return accruing to each participant.

Agricultural extension is an integral part of the agricultural production process. Ughomah (2001) defined it as the intermediary between the farmer and the research. This implies that the agricultural extension programme serves as a link between the agricultural producers and agricultural researcher. Iwena (1996) opined that agricultural extension is aimed at helping farmers to improve their standard of living through improved agricultural productivity. Okafor (2002) observed that agricultural extension is the process of service, which assists farmers or farm people through educational procedures in improving farming methods and techniques.

The role of agricultural extension as highlighted by Uzoukwu (2007) includes:

- Encouraging farmers to increase their production of food crop, cash crops and livestock's.
- Teaching farmers improved practice in the cultivation, rearing and processing of crops and animals.

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- Helping to collect and collate basic information relating to rural programmes.
- Intermediating between farmers and research institutes.
- Supervising agricultural loans (acquisition and utilization).
- Changing peoples' attitude towards farming and its practices.
- Identification of proper marketing channels.
- Skill development in management and production.
- Supervising agricultural development programmes.
- The field workers for the extension programme are called the extension workers or agents. They have direct relationship with the farmers and observe the needs of the farmers. The extension workers as defined by Nnana (2000) are a person who are involved in disseminating of few ideas and techniques from the research institute to the farmers.

The quality of an extension agent according To Zugu (2002) are as follows:

- He must have good knowledge of his field of operation.
- He must have enough material and financial resources to carry out his duties.
- He must be persuasive in his operation.
- He must be that which does not get annoyed easily.
- He must be interested in his job.
- He must be practically oriented.

7. He must be result conscious and innovative.

The extension agents have as set of recognizable roles in the extension programme. Udeandye (2003) noted some roles of the agricultural extension agents to include:

- Sourcing for farm loans to finance farmers' projects.
- Assisting in sourcing for farm inputs.
- Helping in locating marketing channels for producers.
- Supervising loan usage.
- Evaluating extension programmes.
- Teaching farming practices.
- Assisting in improving farmers outputs.
- Liaising with other agencies that may influence rural environment and the farmers.
- Conducting and organizing training for farmers.
- Organizing and supervising farmers groups into co-operative user groups meetings.
- Planning and executing programmes.
- Providing agricultural consultancy service to the farmers

The Federal Government of Nigeria and that of Anambra State invested huge sum of funds in other to ensure that the agricultural value chain development programme was effectively implemented due to its potentials of increasing food security, employment opportunities and other areas of economic development but researches show that one of the factors that impeded the successes of the programme was due to inadequate agricultural extension delivery. Base of this, this study is geared towards finding out the areas of weaknesses agricultural extension and proffer remedies.

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Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are follows

- To ascertain the problems faced by agricultural extension agents during the implementation of the agricultural value chain development programme in Anamabra State.
- To recommend possible solutions to the identified problems.

Population: The population of the study comprised the study of all the 205 agricultural extension agents in that participated in the implementation of the value chain development programme in Anambra State.

Sample: One Hundred extension agents were randomly selected for data collection.

Instrument for data collection: The questionnaire technique was adopted to for the data collection.

Method of data analysis: Data collected analysize by the use of percentage technique.

Date analysis

S/n		Agreed		Disagree	
		A	PA (%)	A	PD (%)
1	None involvement of farmers in planning agriculture programmes leads to non-commitment of farmers when it is introduced by extension agents	70	70%	30	30%
2	Language barriers leads to improper dissemination of innovations by extension workers	60	60%	40	40%
3	Poor means of publicizing extension programmes leads to inadequate publicity and how awareness level	85	85%	15	15%
4	High level of illiteracy among farmers affects the rate of adoption of innovations	80	80%	20	20%
5	Absence of credit facilities to farmers make them to uninterested and prevent and the implementation of accepted innovation	90	90%	10	10%
6	Insufficient motivation of the extension agents by way of better remuneration for their efforts tends to retards their performance	86	86%	14	14%
7	Inadequate resources to travel or provides the farmers' needs makes it difficult to carry the farmers along	74	74%	26	26%
8	Inadequate supply extension agents with respect to quantity makes few agents having more farmers to Carter for thereby leading to inefficient	88	88%	12	12%
9	Poor transportation system and motorable roads militates against the activities of the extension agents	93	93%	7	7%
10	Inadequate evaluation machinery makes it difficult for the extension agents to assess their own achievement or performance	89	89%	11	11%
11	Inconsistent agriculture research information makes it difficult for the extension agents to supply reliable information to the farmers	86	86%	14	14%

Note:

A: Agree
PA: Percentage Agree
D: disagree
PD: Percentage disagree

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Result Interpretation

- From the results of item number 70% of the respondents agreed that non-involvement of farmers in programme planning leads to non-commitment to the programme hen introduced by extension agents while 30% of the respondents disagreed to that.
- From item number 60% of the respondents claim that a language barrier leads to improper dissemination of innovation by the agents while 40% of the respondents disagreed.
- From item number 85% agreed that poor means of publicizing extension programmes leads to low publicity and low awareness while 15% disagreed.
- From item number 80% of respondents agreed that high level of illiteracy among farmers affect the rate of adoption of innovations while20% disagreed.
- From item number 90% of the respondents agreed that the absence of credit facilities to farmers make them interested in extension programmes and prevent the implementation of innovation while10% disagreed.
- The result from item 6 shows that 86% of the respondents agreed that insufficient motivation of the agents by way of better remuneration of their efforts tends to retard their performance while 14% disagreed.
- From item number 74% of the respondents agreed that inadequate resources to travel or provides the farmers needs make it difficult to motivate the farmers while 26% disagreed.
- To item number 88, all the respondents agreed that inadequate supply of extension agents with regards to number of farmers post as a challenge while 12% disagree to that.
- From item number 93% of the respondents agreed that poor transportation facilities and motorable roads militate against the activities of the extension agents while 7% disagreed.
- From item number 89% of the respondents agreed that inadequate evaluation makes machinery makes it difficult for the extension agents to assess their own performance or achievements while 11% disagreed.
- Finally, from item number 86% of the respondents agreed that inconsistent agricultural research information makes it difficult for the extension agents to supply reliable information to the farmers while 14% disagreed.

Research Findings

From the data collected and analysis made, the following findings were made:

- That non-involvement of farmers in the planning of agricultural programmes does not result in non-commitment to such programmes when introduced by extension agents.

- That language barrier leads to improper dissemination of innovations by the extension workers.
- That poor means of publicizing extension programmes leads to inadequate publicity and low awareness level.
- That high level of illiteracy among farmers affects the rate of adoption of innovation.
- That absence of credit facilities to farmers makes them uninterested in extension programmes and also prevents the implementation of accepted innovation.
- That insufficient motivation of extension agents by way of better remuneration tends to retard their performance.
- That inadequate resource to travel or provide the farmers needs makes it difficult to motivate the farmers.
- That inadequate resource to travel or provide the farmers needs makes it difficult to motivate the farmers.
- That the number of extension agents in agricultural development agents' area are few that their work load is relatively high, and thereby leading to ineffectiveness.
- The poor transport system and poor road network militates against the activities of extension agents.
- That inadequate evaluation machinery makes it difficult for the agents to assess their own achievement or performance.
- That inconsistent agricultural research information makes it difficult for the extension agents to supply reliable information to the farmers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- The means for publicizing extension programmes in the area should be improved upon being assisted by the State and Local Government in improving all relevant forms of media specially the public address system to carter for a wild range of audience.
- Adult literacy programmes should be properly implemented in the area to improve the literacy level of the people and bring to the consciousness of extension importance.
- Micro-finance banks should be established in each of agricultural communities for easy access to loads and the loaning conditions should not be stringent.
- The government should provide better condition of service to the extension agents by way of remuneration to motivate them and enhance better performance.
- The government should endeavour to be providing impressed to each extension worker to enable them meet farmers needs.
- The government should employ more agents to reduce the work load of the existing agents so that the ratio of agents to farmers should be one agent to ten farmers as this will bring about effectiveness.
- The local government authority should put the community roads in place and in collaboration with the State government supply vehicles and motor cycles to the agents to improve their mobility.

- There should be staff appraisal on the bases of peers and self appraisal format for assessment of agents.
- All the research stations in the country should work together and are sent to the reconcile results and recommendations before they extension agents for implementation, to prevent inconsistent innovation information.
- The extension agents should be subjected to staff improvement programme on yearly bases in order to improve on their knowledge and skills workshops and seminars should be organized monthly for update of knowledge.

Conclusion

The agricultural extension agents in Anambra State are faced with some problems such as poor remuneration, inadequate resource to operate, poor road networks and transportation. Facilities, inconsistent research information, high level of illiteracy the part of the farmers, heavy work load on the agents among others as identified by the researcher. If the recommendations are strictly implemented especially in the area of improving the literacy level of the farmers, employment of more agents, putting in place the road networks, assisting the farmers financially amongst others, the farmers will be highly motivated to participate in extension innovations, the agents as well be motivated and perform better and the desire for Agricultural growth and development will be achieved.

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