

Chapter 12

Information Need and Seeking Behavior of Farmers in Laduba Community of Kwara State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The chapter present the report of a study that examined information needs and seeking haviour of farmers in Laduba community, Kwara State, Nigeria. This study adopted a survey research design using simple sampling technique to select 28 respondents from the population. Structured questionnaire was designed for the collection of data. It was discovered from the findings that majority of the farmers were illiterate of the middle aged group between 31-40. The farmers plant many crops, but it is noticeable that the farmers plant cassava mostly, the area which the farmers indicated they need information most is on agriculture, it was also observed that the farmers access information from colleagues (co-farmers), friends and relatives, agricultural extension workers. The information needs of the farmers in this study on agriculture includes how to prevent diseases for their crops on the farm and after harvesting, the farmers also stated that they need information on how to seek for loan, where to get the best market to sell their farm produce and how to get the best agro-chemical for effective use. In this study it was discovered that the challenges the farmers face in acquiring information includes, the inability to read and write in English language, lack of constant electricity supply, conflict among members of various associations and lack of access to agricultural extension workers. It is recommended that the farmers should be given effective adult education, provision of information centre with necessary personnel and information media to boost information accessibility. Also the government was encouraged to negotiate with mobile telecommunication operators to subsidize services so that the farmers who form majority in the rural areas can access information and communicate easily through their mobile phones.

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INTRODUCTION

Information is quite indispensable to the progress of any business (Aziagba & Okede, 2011). The case of farmers is not an exceptional. Availability, accessibility of timely, concise and accurate information is a tool that has the capacity to reduce uncertainty. Hence it is an important resource in an economic planning and other life endeavor.

According to Swanson, (2008) information needs assessment give programme designers the ability to develop interventions that target users with specific information needs. (Swanson & Rajalahli, 2010) explained that the level and effort to search for information either local, national and global information depend on the aspiration of the searchers and the authors added that farmers' ability to search for information depends on the sources that are available to them. Hence, it is expected that local information needs of the farmers could be met by well-organized information acquisition and dissemination system that uses traditional and modern methods.

In Nigeria, according to (Okunade & Williams, 2014) quite a number of Nigerians are rural farmers living in small farming communities. In line with Okunade's view, Laduba is one of the Nigerian rural communities dominated by farmers. The community is subdivided into smaller clans and budoagun which has highest concentration of farmers in the community is one of them. The farmers' population in this community is about 500, it is located in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. The farmers in this community practice subsistence agriculture, which (Okunade & Williams, 2014) described as small scale farming using simple implements like hoes and cutlasses to meet the farmer's household needs and with very little for sale.

However, the advantage of availability of vast land in Laduba community and its nearness to Ilorin, the Kwara State capital made the community to attract different categories of elite who wants to engage in farming from Ilorin. In view of its strategic location, the community was selected as an adopted village by Nigerian Stored Products Research Institute (NSPRI), a Research Institute with the national mandate to research into post-harvest management of agricultural crops. Hence, the Research Institute do give her developed technologies through research to farmers at Laduba to use, while personnel from the Institute do regularly visit the farmers using the technologies to determine the efficiency of their research work. This further made Laduba community an attractive farming and research environment.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Nigerian farmers are essentially rural dwellers; they live their lives based on their experiences and traditions that have been passed to them. However, the desire to increase productivity and make a better living through farming is making the scope and source of information required to extend beyond experience and tradition, so, it is observable that farmers now appreciate other sources to get information to improve their life, hence, there is a need to identify these sources and the type of information they get, so that their usage could be maximized or discouraged to enhance the productivity of farmers in Laduba and other similar communities, because without farming, man's existence on the earth would have been a mirage rather than reality (Okunade & Williams, 2014). This study therefore wishes to further support existence of farming and increase in productivity of farmers through determination of information required by them to enhance their productivity.

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