

Agricultural Information Needs and Provision to Crop Farmers in Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area of Imo State.

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Abstract

This paper examines the agricultural information needs and provision to crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema local government area. Five specific objectives/five research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was used to study the crop farmers/rural farmers in Ohaji/Egbema. The population of the study is five thousand seven hundred and forty (5,740) crop farmers. Questionnaire and focus group discussion were used for data collection. Five hundred and seventy-four (574) copies of the questionnaire were distributed, while 560 copies of questionnaire were retrieved and used. The data generated was analysed using simple mean, standard deviation and table. From the analysis and findings, it was deduced that agricultural information is very important to crop farmers in Ohaji/ Egbema local government area. It also reveals that the agricultural information needs of the people of Ohaji/Egbema are not being met as expected. The findings also revealed that crop farmers are faced with some challenges such as, poor access road to aid the movement of extension workers, agricultural information not being broadcast in local languages, lack of money to purchase newsletters. However, this study recommends that government should disseminate agricultural information on radio and television twice a week, using Ohaji/Egbema dialect to enable the non-literate farmers understand and apply the innovation while ensuring that radio broadcast on agricultural information is done when majority of the rural farmers would have returned from farm between 7pm – 8pm. Government should also deploy extension workers who are familiar with their native language to them.

KEY WORDS: Agriculture information, Crop Farmers, Rural Farmers, Literate Farmers, Illiterate Farmers Ohaji/Egbema

Introduction

The need of agriculture in any economy cannot be overemphasized. It is observed that agriculture is the mainstay of most African economy and occupies a pivotal position in the development of the continent. A nation cannot attain the state of food sufficiency without the development of her farmers. It is therefore imperative that farmers, whether literate or illiterate who are producers of food should be well informed so they can perform at optimal level. Agriculture is practiced for the purpose of producing food, clothing, shelter, medicines and many more. It is also important to note that agriculture is practiced as a business for economic gain, growth and development.

However, information gap resulting from lack of timely and accurate information available to individuals and the society at large has altered the level of growth and development of many programs and most especially, agricultural programs. Hence providing agricultural information to the people of Ohaji-Egbema in Imo State is imperative. Ohaji-Egbema is an oil-rich Local Government Area in the Imo State Nigeria. The local council lies in the south-western part of Imo state with land area of 1,154,4,6 square kilometers. It shares boundaries with Owerri in the East, Oguta LGA in the north and Ogba/ Egbema/Ndomi in Rivers state in the South-West. Its headquarters is Mmahu-Egbema. The local government area was created by the Gen. Ibrahim B. Babangida's administration by the August 27, 1991 presidential proclamation, created out of the former Ohaji/Egbema/Oguta LGA. Ohaji/Egbema comprises of three political districts: Ohaji East, Egbema North, and Ohaji West. The Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area has seventeen autonomous communities. The inhabitants of these communities are predominantly petty traders, subsistence farmers and civil servants. Their economic activities are based on agricultural work, including the cultivation of cassava, potatoes,

corn, yam, maize etc. The people of Ohaji/Egbema are agrarians in nature and as a result need adequate agricultural information for them to compete maximally with their counterparts in the urban centres.

Information is said to be power; therefore, the importance of information to the development of agriculture now that the Federal government of Nigeria is doing everything humanly possible to revive the agricultural sector for improved-economy cannot be over emphasized. In agriculture, new information, skill, approach and knowledge will bring about innovation and rapid increase in productivity.

As agriculture becomes more complex, the farmers' access to reliable, timely and relevant information source becomes more critical and demanding. This study will reveal the agricultural information needs of farmers (crop farmers) in Ohaji-Egbema Local Government Area and the possible ways of providing them with the needed information. Unarguably, the human race is totally dependent on agriculture and as the world population continues to grow, there must be continuous reassessment of agricultural practices to optimize their efficiency (Nwosu, 2021). In many parts of the developing countries, agriculture remains a highly efficient industry and continues to demonstrate annual increase in productivity. However, Nigeria is still not sufficient in food production due to many reasons such as lack of good agricultural practices, hostile climate, timely or inaccurate information.

Contextually, agriculture can be said to be the art and science of growing plants and other crops and rearing of animals for food and other human needs or economic gain. According to (Rimando, 2017) agriculture is the art and science of crop and animal production for human consumption. As a matter of clarification, crop production deals with growing of crops for use as food and fibre. It includes grains, cotton, tobacco, fruits,

vegetables, nuts and plants. On the other hand, animal production deals with the production of domesticated animals. Subsequently, crop and animal production play a vital role in the provision of basic needs. The evolution of crop farming practice over time had benefitted from skills acquired through cultural/traditional and scientific methods (Cao et al., 2021).

Crop farming is a very popular form of cultivation in Nigeria, and also one of the major areas of farming in West Africa. Crops can be maize, rice, okra, beans etc Crop is usually planted in the first quarter of the year. It is an essential practice, as it is consumed by a number of families. Most homes depend on it as a major source of food. With the right resources and knowledge, one can make a good living out of crop.

The crop farmers comprise both literate and illiterate who are interested in farming. Unarguably, this group of persons must have seen crop farming as something lucrative, and that most daily consume foods are from crop. But for them to produce maximally, information on the application of scientific principles and methods should be made available for them.

It is observed that traditional technique often evolves slowly over several decades, conservatives, limited to a locality or group of people and possible extended by ancestral linkage while the scientific methods has proven to be more versatile, and considered as a better alternative. The application of scientific principles and skills acquire through innovative information has helped to surpass the limitation posed by the traditional way of crop and animal rearing and this has greatly improved production and productivity of livestock with the aid of scientific principles (Long, 2015).

Moreover, one of the key ingredients for farmers to yield good maximum output be it subsistence or commercial is information. Agricultural information provision is the major element of advanced agricultural system, as well as essential promoter for agricultural

development. Improving provision of agricultural information in rural areas will efficiently fill the information gap presently suffered by the rural farmers with the resulting effect of enhancing agricultural produce.

Information which is so much a part of us, seem to be everywhere at the same time, it is central to all human interactions. It is the basic and one of the earliest activities of human beings. Information has been described as the fifth need of man ranking after air, water, food, and shelter (Cao et al 2021). Apata and Ogunrewo (2020) described information as important working tool for the advancement of human and the society at large. Unarguable, any society that does not have access to the information needed will sooner or later be left behind in terms of cultural and technological development. Ekoja (2019) opined that information is required for individual growth and development and by extension, social growth and change.

Obviously, there exist a wide gap between the rural and urban dwellers in the areas of physical infrastructure and social amenities. Sadly, this wide difference/gap between the two groups is more pronounced in the present-day Nigeria where the spirit of equality among individuals has not been recognized rather individualism and gross materialism has been the order of the day. Cao et al (2021) defines rural farmers as farmers who involve in farming and carrying out other related farming activities in the village. They may cultivate food crops, rear livestock's, engage in fishing and hunting among others, but depend on seasonal and natural conditions to carry on their farming activities. The rural farmers have not been recognized as people who need information and most especially timely and accurate information. These rural farmers are both literate and illiterate persons who engage in farming. The literate farmers possess a form of basic education

which enables them to read and write in particular language unlike the non-literate farmers that possess no form of education (Ekoja 2019). The relevance of information in the dissemination of agriculture activities to rural dwellers is indispensable especially at this present dispensation when the Federal Government of Nigeria is making progressive plans towards the development of agricultural sector to better the lives of its citizens and at the same time diversify the economy of the country and create job for the teaming unemployed youth in the country (Nwosu 2021). Information provision services to rural areas in general and to agricultural sector in particular have been of great concern in rural development especially since the beginning of the economic recession in the country.

According to (Spore, 2004) cited in (Oluwatayo and Aliyu, 2022) research has shown that farmers that are well informed are able to perform better in their production than those that are not well informed and this has led to higher yield and profit. The farmers need information on possibilities that exist for improving on their lot and how to effect the necessary changes. They also need specific agricultural information on how to do things that will result in an improved farm yield.

Agricultural information includes agricultural messages through extension services embodied in agricultural technologies and shared between the actors in the agricultural extension system (Tadesse, 2008). Agricultural information dissemination is a crucial stage of agricultural technology development and transfer. It is crucial because if it is not done properly and through appropriate source, it would not serve the said objectives. Adebayo (2006) explained that agricultural information is in no doubt central in enhancing agricultural productivity and facilitating poverty alleviation among rural farmers and ensuring all round agriculture and rural development.

There is no doubt in the assertion that agriculture remain the mainstay of the Nigeria economy, employing about 70 to 80% of the population, just as is the case with sub-Sahara Africa countries. But unfortunately, Sub- Sahara Africa(SSA) stands out as the only region where overall poverty and food insecurity continue to worsen (Forum for Agriculture Research in Africa, 2006). This trend does not signify a good economic performance to the region especially in Nigeria. For the simple fact that the agricultural growth rate was lower than the population growth rate is the main concern regarding the performance of the sector. In the light of the above, Nwodo (2017) asserts that Nigeria has grim economic outlook. Nigeria's external debt has grown unexpectedly, so there is no doubt that the time has come for us to retrace our steps back to agriculture.

Statement of Problem

The gap between the crop farmers in both rural and urban dwellers and between literate and non-literates in the areas of agricultural and physical infrastructure has been observed by many. Sadly, this gap between the two groups is more evident in the present-day Nigeria where the spirit of equality among individuals has not been recognized rather individualism and gross materialism has been the order of the day. Adequate agricultural information is vital for optimal crop productivity. The rural farmers/crop famers more especially farmers in Ohaji/ Egbema LGA have not been recognized as people who need timely and accurate information and as a result, it has affected their farm yield. The relevance of information in the dissemination of agriculture activities to rural/crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema is indispensable especially at this present dispensation when the Federal Government of Nigeria is making progressive plans towards the development of agricultural sector to better the lives of its citizens and at the same time diversify the economy of the country and create job for the teaming

unemployed youth in the country. However, the observed want of information provision services to farmers in Ohaji/Egbema in particular have been of great concern due to the insufficient food production especially since the beginning of the economic recession in the country. This said observation necessitated the need to investigate how agricultural information can reach the rural crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema for optimal production of farm produce.

Objective of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of the provision of agricultural information needs in enhancing the productivity of crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area.

The following specific objectives guided the study:

1. To determine the agricultural information needs of crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema LGA of Imo State
2. To find out the source through which crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema LGA of Imo State access agricultural information.
3. To ascertain the extent to which the agricultural information needs of crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema LGA Imo State are met.
4. To find out the problems faced by the crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema LGA of Imo State when accessing agricultural information
5. To determine strategies for improving agricultural information provision for crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema LGA of Imo State

Research Questions

1. What are the agricultural information needs of crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema LGA of Imo State?
2. What are the sources through which crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema LGA of Imo State access agricultural information?

3. To what extent are the agricultural information needs of crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema LGA of Imo State met?
4. What are the problems faced by the crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema LGA of Imo State when accessing agricultural information?
6. What strategies could be employed in improving agricultural information provision for crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema LGA Imo State?

Literature Review

Information is the life wire of any society. The relevance of information to farmers increase by the day. It is information that satisfies the individual desire to know or acquire knowledge on existing subject or field. Odunewo and Omagbemi (2008) also asserted that information is one of the basic human needs after air, water, food and shelter. This makes information very fundamental to every living people all over the world thereby, enabling people to relate with one another. The concept information also refers to the facts obtained from various sources or media use in reshaping the vision, thoughts, understanding and actions of individuals or group (Kolawole&Igwe, 2016). According to Okezie (2015) information is naturally in abundance in various formats and various sources with intrinsic value. It has the ability to alter positions, views, persons, situations, as well as mind-set. When people require information to solve certain problems, the issue of information needs arises. However, information that is not accessible is information that is not useable. This underpins the perspective of United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), as cited in Amadi, Udo and Ekpenyoung(2020), which posit that information that is available and useful is that information that is accessible. Farmers in Ohaji-Egbema need information, because the steady flow of information, whether through digital tools or manual

systems keeps human society alive, and serves as a prime agent for actions and societal transformation.

Agricultural Information Need of Crop Farmers.

One of the key ingredients for farmers to yield good output is information. Information such as weather forecast, types of soil and the best soil type for planting different crops, better crop rotation practice and fertilizer application, crop disease treatment and control, agricultural credit facilities, improved varieties of seeds, etc were all required. Information need is the lack of appropriate information on which to base choice for better service or benefit in general. Information need, as Miranda and Tarapanof (2018) put it, is defined as a state or process started when one perceived that there is a gap between the information and knowledge available to solve a problem and the actual solution to the problem. In LisWiki (Library and information science Wiki) (2008), information need seen as the recognition that one's knowledge is inadequate to satisfy a goal.

Agricultural Information Sources

The government should take more action in informing the people on the sources through which crop farmers can access agricultural information. Due to the need to access available information by farmers who have the potential to promote agricultural productivity, crop farmers should be exposed to all sources available e.g. radio, television, community library, extension exhibition (Agbato, 2008, Fahimuddin et al., 2016). Sources of pertinent information as one of the factors of production are very relevant in agricultural production. Unarguable, the quality and quantity of information and its sources goes a long way in educating farmers on what is expected of them.

Information Provision for Improved Tools and Equipment

Farming is much slower and less productive due to the unavailability of information on new and improved technology to the farmers. As of today, majority of the farmers still make use of crude tools such as hoes, cutlasses etc. all these make agricultural production less timely and slow and consequently low yield. The uses of modern tools have been confirmed by many authors to be timely and more effective in agricultural production. Information and use of improved technologies tend to raise output level and reduce average cost of production which in turn results in substantial gains in farm income (Challa, 2023).

Information on Soil/Crop Type

Crops like maize, rice require certain soil conditions for productivity. Example, soil that is good for groundnut may not be good for maize. Information should be given to these farmers to improve the conditions of the soil and the type of soil meant for a particular seed or plant. One way of doing this is by educating the farmers on the applications of organic and sometimes inorganic fertilizers. A number of authors have reported increased yield following the application of fertilizers in nutrient low soils (Amanze et al., 2022).

Crop farmers experience massive failure in agricultural production due to information on the crop they are producing and other related factors affecting their production. Any attempt in mastering these interrelated factors will definitely affect their yields. The right sources to know about a crop, when to apply fertilizer and/or pesticides, mode of storage to mention but a few will go a long way in increasing farmers yields (Agbato, 2008).

It is therefore important that farmers access information through information sources readily available for them, for this will keep the farmers abreast of timely information and as such contribute to food security and

economic growth. The maize farmers in Ohaji-Egbema requires information in the supply of inputs, new technology, early warning systems on drought, pest and diseases, credit, market prices and their favourable competitors so as to actively and effectively contribute to national economic growth and agricultural development. Many studies have shown that the information provisions as regards the use of improved farm inputs such as high yielding crop varieties, improved farm tools and equipment has tremendously increased crop yields (Challa, 2023).

Problems Faced by Crop farmers in Accessing Agricultural Information.

Farmers in rural areas are usually neglected, this maybe as a result of the difficulties experienced in reaching them. Olasehinde, Ojao and Mao (2023) stated that farmer in the rural areas are confronted with challenges like bad road, poor radio and television signal, lack of trained extension workers to deployed to the area. The challenges have failed to expose rural farmers to modern ways of agricultural productions. In order to guide and advise farmers on the adoption of new technologies, provision should be made in addressing the said problems so that agricultural extension services can reach the rural farmers. This would help farmers take charge and produce crops more effectively with better yield and profits (Danso-Abbeam et al., 2018).

Agricultural Information on the Supply of Improved Crop Varieties, Fertilizers, Pesticides etc.

Farmers should be familiar with the benefit of improved crop varieties and chemical fertilizers through exposures and these inputs should be easily accessible through cooperative societies. The importance of the use of improved crop varieties and other inputs cannot be overemphasized. Take for instance, a linear endogenous treatment–effect model based on a matched sample obtained from propensity score matching shows that improved maize varieties increase maize yields by

38.7%. At the same time, the selectivity-corrected and stochastic metafrontier approaches show that the yield advantage of improved varieties results from their high technology (Olasehinde et al., 2023). The information on varieties and agrochemicals should be disseminated and distributed cheaply throughout the rural communities.

Technical Know How

Many farmers experience massive failure in agricultural production due to lack of knowledge on the crop they are producing and other related factors affecting their production. Any attempt in mastering these interrelated factors will definitely affect their yields. The knowledge of crop, when to apply fertilizer and/or pesticides, mode of storage to mention but a few, will go a long way in increasing farmers yields (Agbato, 2008).

It is therefore important that farmers access information as this will contribute to food security and economic growth. The rural farmers in Ohaji-Egbema requires information in the supply of inputs, new technology, early warning systems on drought, pest and diseases, credit, market prices and their favourable competitors so as to actively and effectively contribute to national economic growth and agricultural development. Many studies have shown that the information provisions as regards the use of improved farm inputs such as high yielding crop varieties, improved farm tools and equipment has tremendously increased crop yields (Challa, 2013).

Eze (2013) conducted a research on the information needs of prison and resource provision through the prison library in south- East zone of Nigeria. The research design used was descriptive survey. In a similar view, Ozioko (2007) studied the reproductive health information need of rural women in Enugu State. Survey research technique was used as well. In the same view, Ekoja (2004) carried out a study on sensitizing users for increased information use; the case of Nigerian

farmers. The study also adopted descriptive survey. The above related works were similar with the present work as it relates to information and the research design adopted, but differs in topic, and area of study (farmers in Ohaji-Egbema LGA). This is the gap in literature the researcher intends to fill.

However, crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema LGA are both literate and non-literate, they are categorized as farmers in the rural community. The crop farmers are also in need of agricultural information available to farmers in the urban centres of the state. The literatures reviewed showed that farmers are in need of agricultural information, right sources of agricultural information, access to pertinent and timely information etc. Nwosu (2020) and Olashinde (2023) state that agricultural information is being hindered by certain factors such as poverty, lack of technological equipment, cost, inconsistency of extension workers, lack of public libraries and its expected information materials, etc. It is in this backdrop therefore, that this study attempt to find out the information needs of crop farmers and the provision of this information to the people of Ohaji /Egbema.

Methodology

Survey research design was used for the study. Survey is a research method which focuses on a representative sample derived from the entire population (Nwodu, 2006). This method is pertinent because of its ability to ensure a representative outlook and provide a simple approach to the study of values, opinion and attitude of people. It as well provides researchers the opportunity to have a face to face interaction with the respondents. The population of the study is made up of all the registered crop farmers' cooperative societies in the Ohaji/Egbema LGA. According to the data obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources Imo (2022) the population of the registered members of crop farmers' cooperative societies in Ohaji/Egbema

LGA area is 5,740 farmers. For this study, a sample size of 10% of the population (574) was randomly selected using simple random sampling technique. To ascertain this, the researcher will number, fold and put the names of these farmers in a container which will be well-shaken before randomly picking the respondents without replacement. This procedure will be used to avoid bias. The Instrument for data collection is questionnaire, focus group discussion for eliciting more information from both the literate and non- literate respondents. Seventeen (17) research assistants were used for data collection; each for a particular town so as to ensure accuracy and efficiency. The questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data while the focused group discussion will be used to collect qualitative data for the study.

The data generated from the five hundred and sixty (560) duly filled and returned copies of questionnaire were used for the analysis. The research assistance translated the questions/ items in the questionnaire in their local dialect for the illiterate farmers to understand and as well give their own responses. The questionnaire were collated, presented and analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while the response gotten from the focus group discussion was summarised and stated accordingly. The calculated mean score was computed using the following formula below.

$$(X) = \sum \frac{FX}{N}$$

Where X = Mean

$\sum$ = Summation

F = Frequency

X = Score

N = No of scores

The weight of the response options of the questionnaire items thus: SA/VH = 4; A/H=3; D/LE=2; SD/VLE =1

The criterion mean is to be computed using four options

$$\frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.5$$

Strongly Agree/very High Extent = 3.50-4.00;
 Agree/High Extent = 2.50-3.49; Low extent/Disagree
 = 1.50-2.49; Very low extent/ strongly disagree = 1.00-1.99

However, a mean of 2.50 was adopted as a decision rule for the analysis of the data collected. An item with the mean of 2.50 and above was regarded as agreed to/high extent while item below 2.50 were regarded as being to a low extent/Disagree to question while the calculated mean scores were gotten using the raw data generated using SPSS (statistical package of the social sciences)

Results

Table1: Mean Response on the Agricultural Information Needs of the Crop Farmers in Ohaji-Egbema Local Government Area?

S/N	ITEM	LITERATE FARMERS NO. 445			NON-LITERATE FARMERS NO. 115		
		X	SD	DECISION	X	SD	DECISION
1	Introduction of new herbicides and pesticides/uses	3.50	0.45	SA	3.58	0.37	SA
2	Better crop rotation practices and fertilizer application	3.63	0.39	SA	3.76	0.54	A
3	Types of soil and the best soil type for planting	3.59	0.42	SA	3.89	0.33	SA
4	Introduction of improved seedlings	2.56	0.98	A	2.89	0.79	A
5	Crop disease treatment and control	2.58	0.67	A	2.59	0.93	A
6	Use of artificial planting method	2.94	0.52	A	3.16	0.84	A
7	New methods of crop	2.90	0.77	A	2.67	0.69	A

	preservation						
	Grand Mean/SD	3.10	0.60	A	2.83	0.64	A

Table 1 shows that the mean score for literate farmers range from 2.56 to 3.63 with a grand mean of 3.10 and a standard deviation of 0.60. The grand mean of 3.10 shows that crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema agreed that they are in need of agricultural information as itemized. The mean score of the non-literate farmers range from 2.59 to 3.89 with a grand mean of 2.83 and standard of 0.64. This grand mean of 2.83 also shows that non-literate farmers agree to a high extent that agricultural information is necessary. It simply denotes that the both group of farmers agreed to various information needs as itemized above. Though, introduction of new herbicides and pesticides/use, and type of soil and the best soil type for planting were ranked highest with a mean score of 3.50, 3.59 and 3.58, 3.89 respectively. The focused group discussion conducted also revealed that the crop farmers are in need of the agricultural information as itemized. The findings show that agricultural information such as soil type, introduction of new herbicides, use of artificial planting methods etc. are very useful for promoting agricultural productivity. This study is in line with (Challa, 2013) who started that information and use of improved technologies tend to raise output level and reduce average cost of production which in turn results in substantial gains in farm income.

Table 2: Mean Response on the Sources through which Crop Farmers in Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area Are More Likely to Access Agricultural Information?

S/N	ITEM	LITERATE FARMERS NO. 445			NON-LITERATE FARMERS NO. 115		
		X	SD	DECISION	X	SD	DECISION
1	Community library	2.44	0.54	D	2.33	0.66	D
2	Newsletters	2.59	0.65	D	1.89	0.55	D
3	Families	3.58	0.4	SA	3.96	0.45	SA

	and friends		3				
4	Exhibitions	2.32	0.1 2	D	2.18	0.12	D
5	Town criers	2.47	0.9 6	D	2.35	0.45	D
6	Radio	3.50	0.3 4	SA	3.56	0.14	SA
7	Television	3.57	0.6 8	SA	2.54	0.75	SA
8	Extension workers	2.53	0.5 4	D	2.59	0.43	D
	Grand Mean/SD	2.92	0.5 3	A	2.67	0.44	A

Table 2 shows that the mean score for literate farmers range from 2.23 to 3.58 with a grand mean of 2.92 and a standard deviation of 0.53. The grand mean of 2.92 shows that literate crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema agreed that they use the information sources itemised in accessing agricultural information. The mean score of the non-literate farmers range from 1.89 to 3.96 with a grand mean of 2.67 and standard deviation of 0.44. This grand mean of 2.67 also shows that non-literate farmers agree to the sources itemised in accessing agricultural information. It simply denotes that the both group of farmers agreed to various information sources itemised above though families and friends, radio and television were ranked highest with a mean score of 3.50 and above respectively. The focused group discussion conducted on the sources through which crop farmers access information reveals the same information with the data gotten from the questionnaires distributed. The findings from the instruments used showed that agricultural information is easily accessed through families and friends with the mean score of 3.58 and 3.96 respectively. This work is in line with Ekoja (2004) and Cao et al., (2021) who stated that farmers seek agricultural information mostly from families, friends and through radio broadcast.

Table 3: Mean response on the extent to which information needs of the crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area?

S/N	ITEM	LITERATE FARMERS NO. 445			NON-LITERATE FARMERS NO. 115		
		X	SD	DECISION	X	SD	DECISION
1	Introduction of new herbicides and pesticides/uses	2.11	0.44	LE	2.18	0.33	LE
2	Better crop rotation practices and fertilizer application	2.25	0.67	LE	2.44	0.29	LE
3	Types of soil and the best soil type for planting	2.54	0.45	HE	2.17	0.43	LE
4	Introduction of improved seedlings	2.49	0.21	HE	2.00	0.22	LE
5	Crop disease treatment and control	2.54	0.19	HE	2.26	0.23	LE
6	Use of mechanised planting methods	2.33	0.43	LE	2.01	0.62	LE
7	New methods of crop preservation	2.48	0.59	LE	2.10	0.74	LE
	Grand Mean/SD	2.39	0.42	LE	2.17	0.41	LE

Table 3 shows that the mean score for literate farmers range from 2.11 to 2.54 with a grand mean of 2.39 and a standard deviation of 0.42. The grand mean of 2.39 shows that literate crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema disagree and as well responded to a low extent that their agricultural information needs are not met as itemised above. The mean score of the non-literate farmers range from 2.01 to 2.44 with a grand mean of 2.17 and standard of 0.41. This grand mean of 2.17 also shows that non-literate farmers disagree and responded to a low extent that their agricultural information needs are not met. It simply denotes that both group of farmers

responded that their information needs are not met as itemized above though the literate crop farmers responded positively to type of soil and the best soil type for planting and crop disease treatment and control with a mean score of 2.54 and 2.54. Focused group discussions carried out were in line with the responses gotten from the questionnaires distributed. In the course of discussion, the farmers were very angry with the fact that they are not usually aware when fertilizer provided for them by government is available. The findings is in line with Ekpenyoung (2020), who posit that information that is available and useful is that information that is accessible.

Table 4: Mean Response on the Problems Faced by the Crop Farmers in Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area in the Course of Accessing Agricultural Information?

S/N	ITEM	LITERATE FARMERS NO. 445			NON-LITERATE FARMERS NO. 115		
		X	SD	DECISION	X	SD	DECISION
1	Poor public relation of the extension workers	3.54	0.65	A	3.65	0.27	A
2	Inability to read and write i.e. illiteracy	2.47	0.32	D	3.82	0.81	SA
3	Poor radio and television signals	2.11	0.41	D	2.34	0.53	D
4	Agricultural information on radio and television is always aired at odd hours when farmers who desire such information have gone to their farms	3.89	0.51	SA	3.86	0.36	SA
5	Lack of rural electrification or constant epileptic	3.90	0.59	SA	3.54	0.31	SA

	power supply in communities that have electricity						
6	Lack of access roads for easy community visit of extension workers	3.50	0.54	A	2.64	0.54	A
7	Agricultural information is not broadcast on radio and television using the native language	3.98	0.65	SA	3.59	0.44	SA
8	Lack of money to purchase newsletters, leaflets on agricultural information	2.23	0.32	D	2.11	0.72	D
	Grand Mean/SD	3.20	0.49	A	3.19	0.49	A

Table 4 shows that the mean score for literate farmers range from 2.11 to 3.89 with a grand mean of 3.20 and a standard deviation of 0.49. The grand mean of 3.20 shows that literate crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema agreed to the problems faced in the course of accessing agricultural information as itemised above. The mean score of the non-literate farmers range from 2.11 to 3.82 with a grand mean of 3.19 and standard deviation of 0.49. This grand mean of 3.19 also shows that non-literate farmers agree to the problems faced in the course of accessing agricultural information as itemized. It simply denotes that both group of farmers agreed that they face problems in accessing agricultural information though the literate and non-literate crop farmers responded positively. Agricultural information is not broadcast on radio and television using the native language, Agricultural information on radio and television is always aired at odd hours when farmers who desire such

information have gone to their farms. However, they disagree on the inability to read and right with a mean score of 2.47 and 3.82 respectively. The group discussion is in agreement with the findings above, meaning that crop farmers faced a lot of problems in accessing agricultural information. This work is in line with (Oluwatayo and Aliyu, 2007) research that farmers that are well informed through means suitable for them are able to perform better in their production than those that are not well informed, and this has led to higher yield and profit. The farmers need information on possibilities that exist for improving on their lot and how to effect the necessary changes.

Table 5: Mean Response on the Strategies for Improving Information Provision for the Rural Farmers in Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area?

S/N	ITEM	LITERATE FARMERS NO 445			NON-LITERATE FARMERS NO 115		
		X	SD	DECISION	X	SD	DECISION
1	Construction of good access roads to enable regular visits by extension workers and other agricultural agents	3.53	0.53	SA	3.65	0.32	SA
2	Building community libraries that would help in procuring books, newsletters, leaflets, etc. on agricultural information	2.57	0.85	A	2.17	0.75	D
3	Provision of community rural electrification with the help of the state government	3.66	0.52	SA	3.51	0.45	SA
4	Introduction	2.50	0.63	A	2.77	0.62	A

	of new power transformers to assuage power interruptions						
5	Installation of radio and television antennas at strategic places by radio and television stations in the state to aid in better reception of radio and television signals	2.89	0.91	A	2.91	0.78	A
6	By disseminating agricultural information on radio and television twice a week, using Ohaji/Egbema dialect to enable the illiterate farmers understand and apply the innovations	3.00	0.34	A	3.97	0.49	SA
7	Ensuring that radio broadcast on agricultural information is done when majority of the rural farmers would have returned from farm (7pm and 8pm)	3.54	0.39	SA	3.85	0.86	SA
	Grand Mean/SD	3.09	0.49	A	3.26	0,61	A

Table 5 shows that the mean score for literate farmers range from 2.50 to 3.66 with a grand mean of 3.09.and a standard deviation of 0.49. The grand mean of 3.09 shows that literate crop farmers in Ohaji/Egbema agreed

to the strategies for improving information provision to farmers. The mean score of the non-literate farmers range from 2.17 to 3.97 with a grand mean of 3.26 and standard deviation of 0.61. This grand mean of 3.26 also shows that non-literate farmers agree to the strategies for improving information provision to farmers. It simply denotes that the both group of farmers agreed to the strategies as itemised above, though the literate and non-literate crop farmers responded positively to ensuring that radio broadcast on agricultural information is done when majority of the rural farmers would have returned from farm (7pm and 8pm). The response above is not in variation with the responses gotten from focused group discussion conducted. The findings is in line with (Nwosu 2021) who assert that agricultural information broadcast should be done in the evening hours when most of the farmers must have been back from the farm.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The agricultural information needs of crop famers in Ohaji/Egbema local government area cut across the type of soil to plant, better crop rotation, fertilization application, introduction to new seedling. For the famers to perform maximally, these information needs must be attended to without delay. It was noticed that the farmers prefer some communication channels through which they access agricultural information to others. The rural farmers prefer to access this agricultural information through families, friends and radio, and more especially in their local languages, and preferable between the hours of 7pm-8pm when they must have been back from their various farms. The services of extension workers are not been felt in the communities that made up Ohaji/Egbema. The following recommendations are suggested based on the findings of the study.

1. Extension workers should be deployed to the various communities that made up Ohaji/ Egbema LGA
2. Government should ensure that extension workers who are deployed to rural areas are familiar with the local languages.
3. The Government should ensure that the people of Ohaji/Egbema get the required agricultural information on best soil type for planting, method for disease control, application of fertilisers through trained extension workers information.
4. Government should disseminate agricultural information on radio and television twice a week using Ohaji/Egbema dialect to enable the illiterate farmers understand and apply the innovation
5. Government should ensure that radio broadcast on agricultural information is done when majority of the crop farmers would have returned from farm between 7pm – 8pm.
6. The government should ensure that all the necessary media channels are used in informing the crop farmers of the availability of fertilizers provided for them by the state or federal government.

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